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An imperial victim

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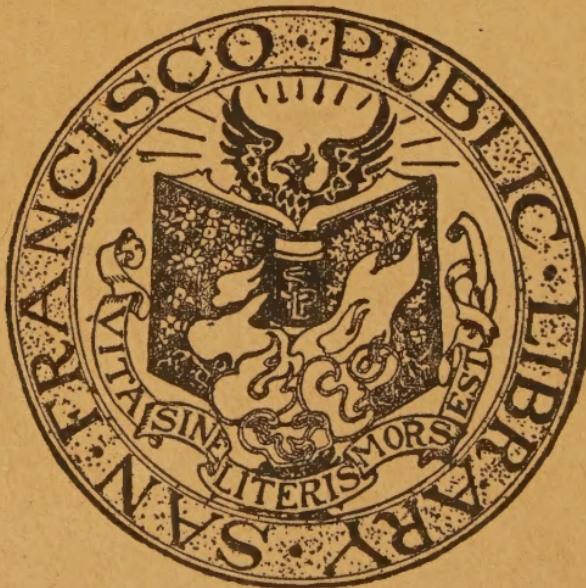
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# AN IMPERIAL VICTIM

MARIE LOUISE

ARCHDUCHESS OF AUSTRIA  
EMPERRESS OF THE FRENCH  
DUCHESS OF PARMA

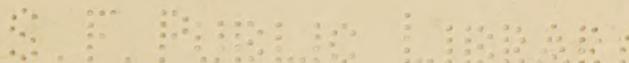
By MRS. EDITH E. CUTHELL

*Author of*  
*"Wilhelmina, Margravine of Baireuth," etc. etc.*

WITH THIRTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS, INCLUDING  
TWO PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPICES

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I



New York

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1912

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PARADES & CEREMONIES

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy"*

TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
A TENDER HEART  
A RULER BELOVED  
A DEVOTED DAUGHTER  
A FAITHFUL FRIEND ;  
A WRONGED WOMAN,  
AS SINNED AGAINST AS SINNING  
THIS  
HER LIFE-STORY

*Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*



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# AN IMPERIAL VICTIM

## CHAPTER I

### *EARLY YEARS*

MARIE LOUISE, born at the Hofburg, Vienna, December 12, 1791, was the eldest and favourite child of Franz II., the last Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and first Emperor of Austria. Her mother was his first cousin, and the second of his four wives, Maria Theresa, daughter of Ferdinand, King of the Two Sicilies, and of Maria Carolina, daughter of the Empress Maria Theresa, and sister to Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, and the friend of Nelson's Emma, Lady Hamilton.

The character of her father is the key to the life-story of Marie Louise. Brought up in the habits of austere discipline and of the passive obedience of the Princesses of Hapsburg to the head of their house, she placed on a pedestal, and worshipped with a pathetic adoration, blind to any fault or failing, the "best of fathers," "the greatest of the sovereigns of Europe"; she loved him with a fervid affection which was absolutely proof against the cruel way in which he sacrificed her to politics. In temperament, but not in character, she much resembled him.

Franz II. was the son of the Kaiser Leopold II., and was born at Florence in 1768, when his father was Grand-

Duke of Tuscany, then an Austrian apanage. His mother was the weak Maria Ludovica of Spain; Franz was Italian and Spanish rather than Austrian, and spent his first sixteen years in Italy.

His uncle, the enlightened Kaiser Joseph II., had no children, and Leopold was his heir. So, when approaching man's estate, Franz was sent for to be brought up at Vienna. He was the weak, spoilt darling of a feeble mother, and since the age of four had been under the charge of the elderly Count Colloredo, *oberhofminister*, of an old Bohemian family. His tutors were Baron Schloisnig and the Jesuit Abbé Diesbach. He was educated—if education it was, for any intellect he possessed was never developed, and in after-life he himself said, “Knowing too much makes one's head ache”—in the most futile manner. The Archduke and his tutors, lodged at the Hofburg in apartments above those of the Kaiser, used to occupy themselves in making birdcages, varnishing sealing-wax boxes, and decorating furniture, and would play at blind-man's buff among the chairs and tables over the Kaiser's head. At nineteen he was married to Elizabeth, Princess of Würtemberg. In 1788 he went to the Turkish War, but the only risk he ran was when his carriage was upset in the panic of Lugas; the following year, with the “Austrian army awfully arrayed,” he went to the siege of Belgrade.

Elizabeth died after two years of marriage, childless; and six months later Franz married his cousin of Naples, exceedingly lively and southern, but even worse educated than himself. Maria Theresa was fond of painting and music, and Franz played the bass-viol in the amateur concerts in which she took part. She soon acquired great influence over her husband; in her letters she signs herself to him, “the Kaiser's tenderest and truest wife and friend.” Fifteen months after their marriage Marie

Louise was born. The Queen of Naples, who possessed something of her great Empress-mother's courage and determination, wrote congratulating her *première tendresse*, as she called her eldest daughter, for having been, during her labour, "so sensible and brave, for uncontrolled groans do not help pain, and cause those present sorrow and disgust. One must put up with the evil for the pleasure of being a mother." The Kaiserinn was subsequently as prolific as her mother and grandmother, bearing to Franz, during the seventeen years of their married life, nine children.

In 1792 Franz became Kaiser. His father had died suddenly, and he hesitated to take up the crown. But his confessor told him that "the government having been laid upon him by God, he could be quite easy in his conscience if he followed the counsel of the majority of his ministers in everything"—advice he faithfully carried out.

Franz II.'s was the last coronation of an Emperor of Germany in the Römersaal at Frankfüt. More than one evil omen was noticed in connection with it. During the ceremony he removed the crown, which pressed upon his brow ; his portrait filled the last remaining space in the long line of Emperors ; at St. Stephen's Cathedral at Vienna, his statue the last niche.

The French Revolution, and the murder of his uncle and aunt, following so closely upon Franz's accession, embittered him, warped his judgment, and stamped him for life as a narrow absolutist. "The people?" he once exclaimed, "I know nothing of the people ! I know only of subjects !" To the professors of the University of Pavia he said : "Know, gentlemen, that I do not desire cultured men, nor studious ones, but I wish you to train for me faithful subjects, devoted to me and my house." In 1834 he had printed in a catechism for the use of

schools at Milan : "How should subjects behave to their rulers ?" "Like faithful slaves." "Why ?" "Because their ruler is their master and as such has power over their property and lives." Referring to the Greek War he remarked that "mankind requires from time to time a copious bleeding, otherwise its condition becomes inflammatory, and then the delirium of liberalism breaks out." His body-surgeon one day remarked : "Your Majesty has a good constitution." "What do you say ?" roared the Kaiser. "Never let me hear that word again ! Say robust health if you like. There is no such thing as a good constitution. I have no constitution, and never will have."

Franz always had an aversion for affairs. He would turn pale at the mere mention of business. Once a fortnight he attended a Council of State as a matter of form, and complained to his valet when he returned from it how it had bored him. When the critical condition of affairs at last compelled him to take a share in the government, he attended chiefly to petty details, satisfying his curiosity by reading secret reports, and interviewing spies, while his ministers and their underlings saw to the great affairs of State.

For the first year of his reign Franz left everything to Colloredo and Schloisnig, whom Vienna dubbed "the two Kaisers." Then Colloredo overthrew the latter, because he was not of sufficient birth, and was dangerous by reason of his superior learning, and so became Chancellor and State Minister. The instrument employed was a clever and lively young Frenchwoman, widow of a de Poutet, captain of Hussars, killed in action, and born a Ffolliott de Crenneville, of the lesser French nobility, but who had had her descent improvised by the Flemish Herald Reydaels back to a Count Ffolliot, of noble Irish family.

Madame de Poutet had been the friend of the State Minister, Thugut, who recommended the clever widow to Colloredo. The latter got her appointed *aja*, or chief governess, to the Archduchess Marie Louise, in succession to Countess Wrbna. In return, Poutet rid Colloredo of Schloisnig by insinuating that the Empress was dying of love for him—a most unfounded statement, for Maria Theresa and Franz were always devotedly attached to each other. A *camarilla* of ladies now managed state affairs, the Empress, her mother, and Madame de Poutet at the head. Talleyrand christened them “the sovereigns of Vienna.” Thugut was brought into the cabinet, as Kaunitz was now in his dotage, and acquired an ascendant over the Kaiser. In 1799 Madame de Poutet effected the great coup of marrying Count Colloredo. She retained her post as *aja* to the little Archduchess, occupying apartments in the palace, where Colloredo was now comptroller, with her little daughter Victoire de Poutet, who became henceforth the companion and life-long friend of Marie Louise.

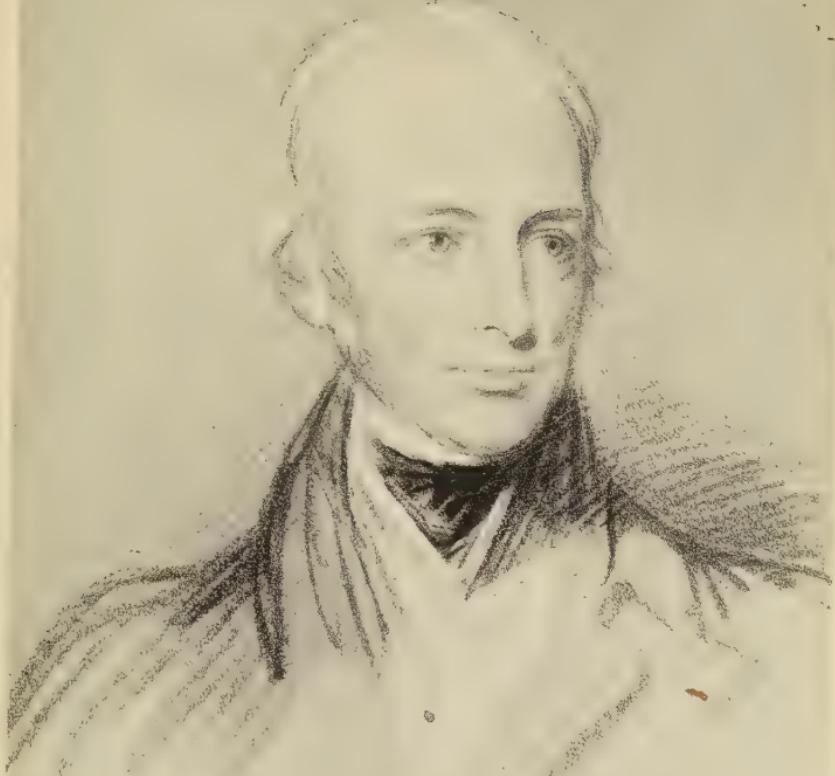
Colloredo, Thugut, Cobenzel, Metternich—these were the succession of chancellors and chief ministers who spoke through Franz, inexpressive and callous, as through a mask, all in their different lines. The ruler of thirty millions of people, Franz thought himself a sort of demi-god, and would never, as it is often the way with weak natures, allow himself to be ruled if he knew it, which made him so difficult to manage. Napoleon said of him that he was “a child governed by his ministers, a weak and false prince, and a good and religious man, but a blockhead occupied only with botany and gardening.” He blamed his insincerity which made him “the dupe of intriguers.” Again: “I thought the Emperor Francis a good man. I made a mistake:

he is only a fool. Without doubt he has made himself the instrument of Metternich to ruin me." Lord Holland called him "a ruler of some intelligence, but of no heart and no justice." Hormayr said: "I take upon myself to call him "one of the most cold-hearted and selfish men that ever existed. He has lived with the Empress Theresa in the most happy union, but he bore the loss of the mother of his twelve (*sic*) children with singular apathy."

Hoping in the great game of chance to recover power and independence, Franz ever hankered for war. "No one," says Schiller, "is more readily inclined for war than spiritual princes and weak monarchs." Gentz, Metternich's understrapper, speaks of the Emperor's "absolute want of strength of character." Napoleon said that his father-in-law was "always of the opinion of the last person he had spoken to."

Franz was merciful as regards ordinary offences, but political crimes he never condoned. "With respect to granting pardons," he said of himself, "I am a very bad Christian, but it goes against the grain with me." His sentences were harsh, cruel, and calculated. Callous and heartless, he was, to all intents and purposes, the actual jailer of his dreaded dungeons of Spielberg, the turnkey of Confalonieri and Silvio Pellico. He himself kept a note-book of his political prisoners there—each had a number—ordering their rations and their cover-lids, denying them books to read, and setting traps for them through their confessors. "By your intellects you have sinned," he said, "by your intellects you shall suffer."

When the cholera raged in Vienna in 1831 the Kaiser proclaimed by placards that it was "not infectious," and was believed. "He himself," says Count Mailath, "spoke to me about it and expressed his satisfaction



*By Sir Thomas Lawrence.*

FRANCIS, FIRST EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA,  
Father of Marie Louise.



that the proclamation had sufficed entirely to change the ideas of the Viennese." However, Franz himself retired to Schönbrünn.

He was judged differently by different people. Hormayr calls him the "Emperor Tartuffe." He loved to be considered the essence of good nature. His beloved *Wienerkinder* consulted him about marriages and domestic matters, for he was accessible and unostentatious, gave assistance to anybody and everybody, walked freely about his capital, and loved to crack jokes in the broad Viennese he habitually spoke. In his will he left his "love to his people." On Corpus Christi Day "Father Franz," the "people's Kaiser," might be seen walking the streets in the religious procession, lighted taper in hand. For him, in 1804, Haydn composed the Austrian National Hymn.

His daughter's letters show that his wife and family regarded him as the best and most beloved of husbands and fathers. His family life resembled that of one of his own Vienna *bourgeois*. In Marie Louise's childhood there were few court festivities and no society, so to speak, in the Austrian capital. The numerous Archdukes lived quietly and retired. The aristocracy resided in the capitals of their provinces, or on their vast estates, and rarely came to Vienna. The houses of the foreign ambassadors were the only meeting-places. In winter the Imperial family dwelt in the great gloomy pile of the Hofburg in the heart of the walled city, surrounded by narrow streets. In summer they moved to Schönbrünn, or Laxenburg, a few miles outside. Here the Kaiser would indulge in his botanical and gardening tastes and fill the finest greenhouses in Europe with the choicest collections of plants and flowers from all over the world, he himself attending to some of the most precious specimens.

Originally a hunting-box of the Kaiser Mathias, the palace of Schönbrunn, as it now stands, was erected by Maria Theresa in such haste that it was finished by torch-light. Even in Marie Louise's days some of the rooms were still draped in black since the death of the great Empress's husband. Schönbrunn lies on the right bank of the sluggish Wien. The central gateway is flanked either side by two red marble obelisks surmounted by Austrian spread-eagles. The *cour d'honneur* is like a barrack square, but for the two fountains. Facing the entrance is the grand pavilion flanked either side by two buildings, forming projections; all are ornamented with Doric columns. A horse-shoe stairs leads to a massive doorway.

Behind lie eighteenth-century gardens, green hedges, and white statues. Beyond, a group of Tritons and sea-horses surround a central lawn whence winding paths lead up through shrubberies to the Gloriette, arch and colonnade, commanding a fine view of Vienna, the Danube, and the high mountains beyond. On either side the palace lie the greenhouses; on the right were Franz's zoological and botanical gardens, where each animal had its sheltered habitat surrounded by appropriate trees and flowers. The spring which gives the palace its name lies hidden in the labyrinth, and a marble nymph drops water from an urn into a shell. In the park of oaks, elms, and beeches, with lakes, are deer and wild boar. The park is public, and in summer is used for fêtes, and as a public play-place, by the Viennese.

The Kaiserinn Maria Theresa was always foremost a wife, and then a mother. She accompanied the Kaiser in his progresses through his wide domains, and when at home occupied herself with the politics he neglected. Marie Louise was brought up strictly by a strict mother, and somewhat repressed. Necessarily

left much to the care of her *aja*, the Countess Colloredo soon gained a great influence over her, and also her lasting affection, for Marie Louise always yearned for sympathy and love. The Countess is always *maman* in the child's letters to her friend Victoire, while her own mother, the Kaiserinn, is *ma mère*. Marie Louise had no sisters near her own age ; brothers intervened between her and Leopoldine and Marie Clementine, whom she was very fond of and petted. Victoire de Poutet was her only friend and companion. One of her three waiting-women, Stressler, was with her from the time she was two years old till her marriage.

Save for an attack of smallpox, which, however, left her scarcely marked, Marie Louise's childhood was uneventful. Her notes to the Countess de Colloredo, written "from one floor to the next," give us glimpses of a very simple home-life. They are sometimes rather pathetic little notes, and set one thinking what happier things a more retired life might not have had in store for the writer, had not fate raised her to such a position of glare and glamour.

By nature a country child, Marie Louise inherited her father's out-of-door tastes. Her early letters teem with inquiries of the many pets : asking if the doves have begun to build, if the pet hare will now eat out of one's hand, and describing the capture and escape of a beautiful green frog. Especially do they reveal her clinging, affectionate nature, which explains much of her failings, for Marie Louise had the *défauts de ses qualités*. Wonderfully well expressed they are for a child of eight, written in French, with an occasional lapse into German when French fails ; kind and feeling, too, as when the Countess loses her father ; penitent, when she has been naughty and implores forgiveness from her dear Colloredo, to whom she often signs herself, "yours for all my life." When a baby

comes to the Colloredo household she embroiders it a little frock ; another time she makes her dear Countess a scarf.

At the age of ten begin the letters to Victoire de Poutet. Marie Louise's education was proceeding apace, and she must have been a quick child, for they are written in a mixture of French, German, Italian, and English, and sometimes in a secret language—French written backwards, and a private cypher known only to the two little confidantes ; even a word or two of Latin appears and Turkish occasionally slips in. Riedler taught her logic and Kotzbuch the piano, and, as became a German, she was early proficient in needle-craft.

Marie Louise accompanied her father and mother when they went into residence in their Hungarian capital, and scrawling—so much that *maman* threatens to stop the correspondence—she describes “ how fine papa looked upon his throne ” at the opening of the Diet at Pressburg, and the splendour of the state ball. More to her liking, however, was the country life and rambles, the Kaiser's hunting in the Altenburg, and the fishing for cray-fish she herself was allowed to indulge in with him.

When back again in Vienna at the palace of Laxenburg, she enjoys the sledging. The Queen of Naples, driven from her throne by Napoleon, had arrived at her daughter's Court. The stirring events now taking place in Europe, and the society of her grandmother, made an impression upon Marie Louise. Though only eleven, we find her taking an interest in the foreign newspapers which the ladies-in-waiting take in, and learn her first views on Bonaparte.

“ *Maman* has made me note the title of a book that she is sending for to France, and which she thinks will do for us. It is the ‘ Plutarch for Youth ’ by the same Blanchard who has written the two books we have already

read, the lives of illustrious men from Homer to Bonaparte. This latter name tarnishes his work, and I wish that he had rather ended it with Franz II., who has done some remarkable things in restoring the Theresianum, etc., whereas the other has only committed injustices in taking some people's countries away from them. *Maman* has told me just now about an odd thing : that M. Bonaparte, when he was in Egypt, ran away, when all the army was ruined, with only two or three persons, and became a Turk ; that is to say, he told them, 'I am not your enemy, I am a Mussulman, I acknowledge your prophet, the great Mahomet,' and then, on returning to France, he posed as a Catholic, being really one, and then only was he raised to the dignity of a Consul. . . . It is not for me to judge, but I think it is profaning our holy religion to say that one belongs to another, because in the Creed it is said one must confess one's faith."

There was bitter feeling in the nursery at Schönbrunn against Napoleon. One of the favourite games of Marie Louise and her brothers and sisters consisted in arranging a little company of toy soldiers to represent the French army, at the head of which they put the ugliest, which they stabbed with pins and abused as personifying the First Consul.

Marie Louise was not lacking in a sense of humour. For she retails amusing anecdotes to Victoire de Poutet out of a new book she is reading, as, for example, one of the Duke of Berry put under arrest by Louis XIV. because he would not learn his lessons. His tutor shut the shutters, remarking that a prisoner must not see the light of day. " You are quite right," replied the Prince, " the sight of it is as disagreeable to me as is the sight of you ! "

In Advent came Marie Louise's confirmation and first communion. A temporary separation between the

two little friends brought forth the following letter, which shows the more serious side of her character.

“Here we are separated for some time. It will seem longer to me without you, but I must prepare myself for this solemn step which I am about to take, and on which will depend our future happiness. At that moment I shall pray God to grant you a long life, and to bless you, and above all that He may not separate us, and I shall pray also that He will give health to our dear *maman*; she is so precious to us all and most of all to me, because if I were alone, without this help to my soul—O God! I cannot think of it without shivering—how many false steps should I not make without this support! . . . *Maman* will communicate with me, which redoubles my ardour. To-morrow at this hour I shall already have made my first communion, and, with the help of God, made it properly, and in the evening you will read and play with me. . . . I am well, though it is very cold; I kiss you a thousand times and am for life your attached and affectionate friend,

“LOUISE.”

A postscript throws a sidelight on the restrained relations between the Empress and her little daughter. “Our *maman* told me she would take up to-day my apologies to my mother that I might ask her forgiveness. This gives me great joy. It would be greater if she would embrace me, but I dare not hope to attain that favour.”

Marie Louise now knew a little of nine languages and insisted on Victoire replying to her letters in them. Though a present of four green frogs could still give delight, yet she weeps tears over the good Kaiser Joseph’s death-bed letters. At the same time she enjoys the

theatre, criticizing the plays, but yet looks eagerly forward to a little Epiphany party of nine children in the garden which the Countess Colloredo was arranging. It was a great success, and a list of the presents was sent to Victoire. The Kaiserinn came in and chatted for a few minutes, and then the children went into the chapel to see a “really magnificent *crèche*,” representing Christmastide sacred events, such as is still arranged at this season in Roman Catholic churches. There were carriages trotting, a “grandissimo cascade,” as wide as Victoire’s reticule; the three kings and their suites marching, a mill which turned, a fountain, a canal, a fisherman drawing his net, a hermit ringing his bell, a man sawing wood, and two swinging. So much for early nineteenth-century sacred art!

The entertainment concluded with the cutting of the Twelfth cake “in papa’s library,” the finding of the treasures it contained, the choosing of the King and Queen—a pretty glimpse of “the best of fathers” in the bosom of his family, and of the happy home-life so soon to be broken up.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE FIRST FLIGHT*

DARK indeed, both for herself and for her country, was the close of Marie Louise's fourteenth year. Austria, in the summer, had joined the third coalition against Napoleon, with Russia and England. Cobenzel had succeeded Thugut at the helm of the State —frivolous, ugly Cobenzel who, when ambassador at Petersburg, had been *maitre de plaisirs* and playwright to Catherine. The astute Czarina, who had her own forebodings as to the fate of Austria, told him : “Your best play you will write when the French are in Vienna !”

Since the Peace of Luneville the Government was retrograde and supine. Education was in the hands of the priests, and a repressive press censorship had burnt two thousand of Joseph II.’s books as dangerous. That enlightened monarch’s domestic reforms were in abeyance ; the army in a deplorable state—many regiments existed only on paper. There were bread-riots in Vienna and street-fighting. Under such auspices began the Hundred Days of 1805.

The Court, which is to say the Government, was divided into two camps. For peace were Manfredini, old Ligne, Thugut, who said that “Napoleon would ruin the house of Hapsburg,” Archduke Charles, “gentle, amiable, the best captain in Austria,” but short-sighted

as a politician, and grappling, against difficulties, with army reorganization.

For war were Cobenzel, pointing out that all Napoleon's veterans were busy in Spain, Colloredo, the Kaiserinn, dynastically anti-French, and the cream of the aristocracy, headed by the intriguing Countess Poutet-Colloredo. The war party won the day.

In a few days Ney conquered the Tirol. "If the Austrians remain in their position near Ulm," said Napoleon, "my work is soon done!" On October 7 the "weak and maudlin, wrong-headed" Mack capitulated, and the way lay open to Vienna.

In the capital bewilderment and infatuation reigned. The Kaiserinn had just returned from taking the baths at Baden for her failing health, and a letter of Marie Louise to her friend Victoire de Poutet, written two days before the disaster at Ulm, shows how little the approach of the dreaded conqueror was realized. "Five hundred Hanoverians have deserted, and, I think, M. Bonaparte, too; but I am not sure, so don't repeat it;" and she goes on to chat of her presents and prizes. In less than a month "M. Bonaparte" had put her to flight.

Vienna, commanded by old Prince Karl Auersperg, "all but in his second childhood," was taken through a stratagem by Lannes and Murat. The Kaiser went to Olmütz, his family fled to Hungary. The Kaiserinn, with little Leopoldine, went to her husband's headquarters, "well in body, but not in soul." A pathetic series of little notes from Marie Louise to her friend Victoire show the hardships to which the children were exposed, and the anxieties they suffered.

"From RIEGELSBURN, November 4.

"Only a little note from me for thee. It contains that I love you with all my heart, and that we have arrived in good health at this wretched inn."

"KITSÉE, November 4. Past eight o'clock.

"I am keeping my promise to write regularly. We arrived at eight in good health, fine, but very cold weather; we dined at a poor inn. The first post is Fisherment, the Pulverthurm, and Simmering is the place where the Emperor Charles the Fifth had his menagerie. The second post is Deutsch Altenburg, the frontier between Austria and Hungary. The third Riegelsbrunn, where we dined at the inn and remained till half-past four. Then we went a little on foot. It was the idea of kind *maman* (Countess Colloredo). Then to Hainburg, thence to Kitsée, the last two posts very long, but with a charming view, on one side the Danube, the other the village and the mountains and an old castle. We had a very good supper cooked by the cooks of the Prince Esterházy. My heart was heavy at not saying good-bye to you, my kind, sweet Victoire; but it was the orders of your *bonne maman*, and I have to submit. Pray earnestly *le bon Dieu* to let us soon go back to our parents. We are well, and I hope to replace *maman* safe and sound in your arms. I kiss the children; a thousand remembrances to Madame Bertrand. Write all the news, bad and good, and believe I shall share it, oh! my Victoire. . . . Supper has interrupted me, and I am half asleep and must rise early to-morrow. I kiss you a thousand and a thousand times, and, in spite of all the troubles in the world, remain

"Your attached friend,

"LOUISE."

Probably unable to sleep from excitement and fatigue, the poor child was writing again to her friend at one o'clock in the morning, describing her little room, the view from the castle over the vast Hungarian plain, and inquiring anxiously if the Czar had come to her father's assistance.

Next afternoon saw the children hurried across the marshy plain where three rivers join the Danube, to Raab, and lodged in the Archbishop's palace, a striking, fortified building of the Moslem times. Received with enthusiasm by the loyal Hungarians, Marie Louise made her first effort to reply to addresses.

"RAAB, November 5, 1805.

"At every dinner and supper I will write you a little word, if it is in my power. At half-past two we reached Raab, after passing Regensdorf, Wieselbrunn, Hochstrasse, and then to Raab to the sound of drums and the reception by twenty-five Hungarians, if no more. We are here in the Bishop's house, surrounded by the Raab, which here joins the Danube (*sic*). The Bürgermeister takes our notes. I do not know what I am writing. One side the Countess and Marie yell, on the other my brother Ferdinand, and on the third the servants make a great *Gemurmel*, so that my head is in pieces. Adieu. You leave to-day or to-morrow morning. I wish you as happy a journey and as good horses."

But even the fortified palace was not deemed a safe resting-place.

"Acs, at nine in the evening, November 5, 1805.

"Graf Esterházy will bring you this letter. We arrived half an hour ago, well, having dined at Raab, whence I wrote to you by Schiego, when we left I spoke to the deputations ; they shouted 'Vivat !' to my brother and us. Each of us, we talked with the officers of the guard, of the regiment Bucassowitz. Adieu ; I am lazy, and won't write another word."

But she took up her pen again "before seven in the morning. *Maman* writes by Graf Esterházy. We are very anxious at having had no news of you. *Maman*

especially has not slept well. There is a pretty view here and a superb garden. Yesterday all was lit up when we arrived, and nine Hussars preceded us by order of Count Esterházy."

From here to Gran, along the bank of the Danube, where the low spurs of the Bakonyer Wald break the monotony of the Hungarian plain. On arriving at and on leaving Gran, a large town, the richest Archbishopric in Europe, the Imperial children were received by Hungarian officers, and, much to their amusement, the Imperial Cadet School, "little soldier boys," paraded before them. Leaving Gran at seven in the morning, they safely reached Buda-Pesth that afternoon. In three days after quitting Vienna nearly three hundred miles had been covered by the fugitives, and Maria Theresa's great-grandchildren found a safe refuge in the capital of the "kingdom" on the protection of which she had thrown herself in similar dire straits.

For centuries the frontier fortress of Christendom against the Turks, the old city of Buda stands on and below the precipitous Blocksberg on the west bank of the Danube. Pesth, across the river, hardly existed in Marie Louise's day. The Imperial children were lodged in the Royal Palace of the Palatine, or Viceroy of Hungary, their uncle, on the Festing's rock, where are jealously guarded the Hungarian regalia, including the famous gold circlet crown. But though they were safe for the time being, the hearts of Countess Colloredo and her young charges were heavy.

"*OFEN, November 7, 1805.*

"To-day we are *an Ort und Stelle*. We are uneasy, and *maman* too, because we have received no letters. We have arrived in good health at three at Buda, having changed horses at Dobdobor and at Wöreswar, leaving

Gran at seven in the morning. . . . I heard that on November 4, the day we left, the news came that the French had been beaten at Efferding (Essling?) two leagues from Linz beyond Brannow. I have nice quarters in the Palatine's house ; I was to have been lodging in that of Esterházy, but there were 'ructions,' out of which I came off splendidly—a bedroom with a magnificent view, a charming drawing-room, and one for the footmen. *Maman* is *en suite* with me, but not so nice. Madame Würben makes a terrible to-do that my brothers Franz and Josef have to sleep in one room alone, and that the ladies' maids Dürwald and Görög have only a hole to sleep in, and the others only holes. It is indeed true that Baron Stefanéo and my brothers have only three rooms in all." Victoire is upbraided for not writing ; probably, owing to the panic in Vienna, her letters could not get through. "*Maman* being tranquillized, would have slept well had not her room been so cold."

Doubtless the climate in the old fortress above the Danube in mid-November left something to be desired. But the Countess wisely turned Marie Louise's attentions from her present discomforts and anxieties by setting her to begin Rollin's History. The good news of Massena's repulse in Italy cheered the exiles ; the girl's natural light-heartedness reasserted itself, and she gives Victoire an amusing description of her brother's tutor, "the charming Baron Stefanéo . . . pretty pink and white face, especially when he quivers with rage, pretty fair hair, with his green cloth cap with the black leather peak braided in gold, green, red, and grey, wearing a cape and mantle, walking delicately as if his limbs were of glass and he feared to break them, and speaking agreeably a mixture of German, French, and Italian." At Buda, Countess Colloredo and the Baron—"an old woman,"

the Kaiserinn called him—quarrelled ; the latter was very angry over her “ poor children ” and “ the upset.”

A few days’ blessed lull at Buda. But Napoleon had entered Vienna only six days after the Imperial family had quitted it, and the Hungarian capital was no longer considered safe for them. Leaving her nice apartments, with the Palatine’s pleasant garden and the view of the vessels in the broad stream so sheer below, Marie Louise was hurried towards the Galician frontier.

“HARSCHÁNY, November 13.

“We have arrived here in good health. *Maman* says you must sleep here, the roads are too bad for one to go any farther with one’s own horses, or it will knock them up. I am writing from the Posthouse. *Maman* is very anxious about your papa, and if he is worse must go to nurse him and be replaced. This would be terrible for all, and especially for me.”

Then the blow fell. For the first, but by no means the last time, Marie Louise’s happiness was sacrificed to politics. “The intriguing Countess,” as Napoleon called her *aja*, used her young charge as a tool, and led her into secret correspondence and intrigues. But Colloredo overreached herself. The Kaiserinn got wind of what was going on. Of her daughter she said : “I shall ‘ give her beans,’ and punish her sharply” ; but she made the conduct of the Countess, whom she had never liked, an excuse for the dismissal of both the Colloredos. But it was really her husband’s downfall that brought about that of the Countess. He could not speak of his leaving without tears in his eyes. “What have I done ?” he asked the Archduchess Elizabeth, the Kaiser’s aunt. “Kept all counsellors away from the Kaiser,” was the reply. The Colloredos were exiled to their estates, and he, in bad health, only survived his downfall a year.

After the departure of the Countess Marie Louise "was seized upon by her mother," who looked into her education. Not content with choosing her books, she read to her in the evening till she was tired. Countess Faber was appointed *aja* to the Archduchess, and Count Joseph Esterházy comptroller.

These watched over her carefully, but the poor child's heart was sore for the loss of her faithful friends, for, with her parents, of course, went Victoire. Some time elapsed ere the Kaiserinn would even permit of a correspondence with the disgraced favourite. At length, from the royal free town of Kaschaaw on the Hernád, Marie Louise, parted from the father she adored, and from her oldest friends, and anxious about her mother's failing health, writes a pathetic letter to the Countess, with loving wishes and prayers for Victoire's name-day.

"I am trying to be as good as possible, my dear *maman*, and Mde Faber will assure you so. I busy myself very much and do not read, and never will read, any book except what *maman* gives me. I pray to God daily, and on Sundays and feast-days we hear Mass. Console yourself; my consolation is that I may soon see my dear parents again and that God does all for our good. I hope the management of the estates and the education of Caroline will give you interests."

On November 2 came the crash of Austerlitz. Two days later, accompanied only by one aide-de-camp, Franz, "with his usually piteous, but now more than ever decayed appearance," in person came to where Napoleon bivouacked, surrounded by generals and courtiers. Napoleon pardoned Franz; Napoleon promised him peace. But all that Franz remarked, in his broad Viennese jargon, after this unpleasant meeting, was: "Now I've seen him, I can't bear him at all!"

The Peace of Pressburg was the Kaiser's Christmas

present to his people. By it Austria lost 28,000 square miles of territory and 3,000,000 inhabitants. Six months later, by a stroke of his pen, Franz had made an end of the Holy Roman Empire, and styled himself only Emperor of Austria.

It was a sad and lonely Christmas for his children, lodged in the castle of Kaschaaw, belonging to their uncle the Duke of Saxe-Teschau, though they had more freedom than at Buda, pleasant walks in the picturesque Hernd Valley, and the excitement of the passing through of many Russian troops and the Czar himself. For Christmas goes a sad little letter to Victoire :

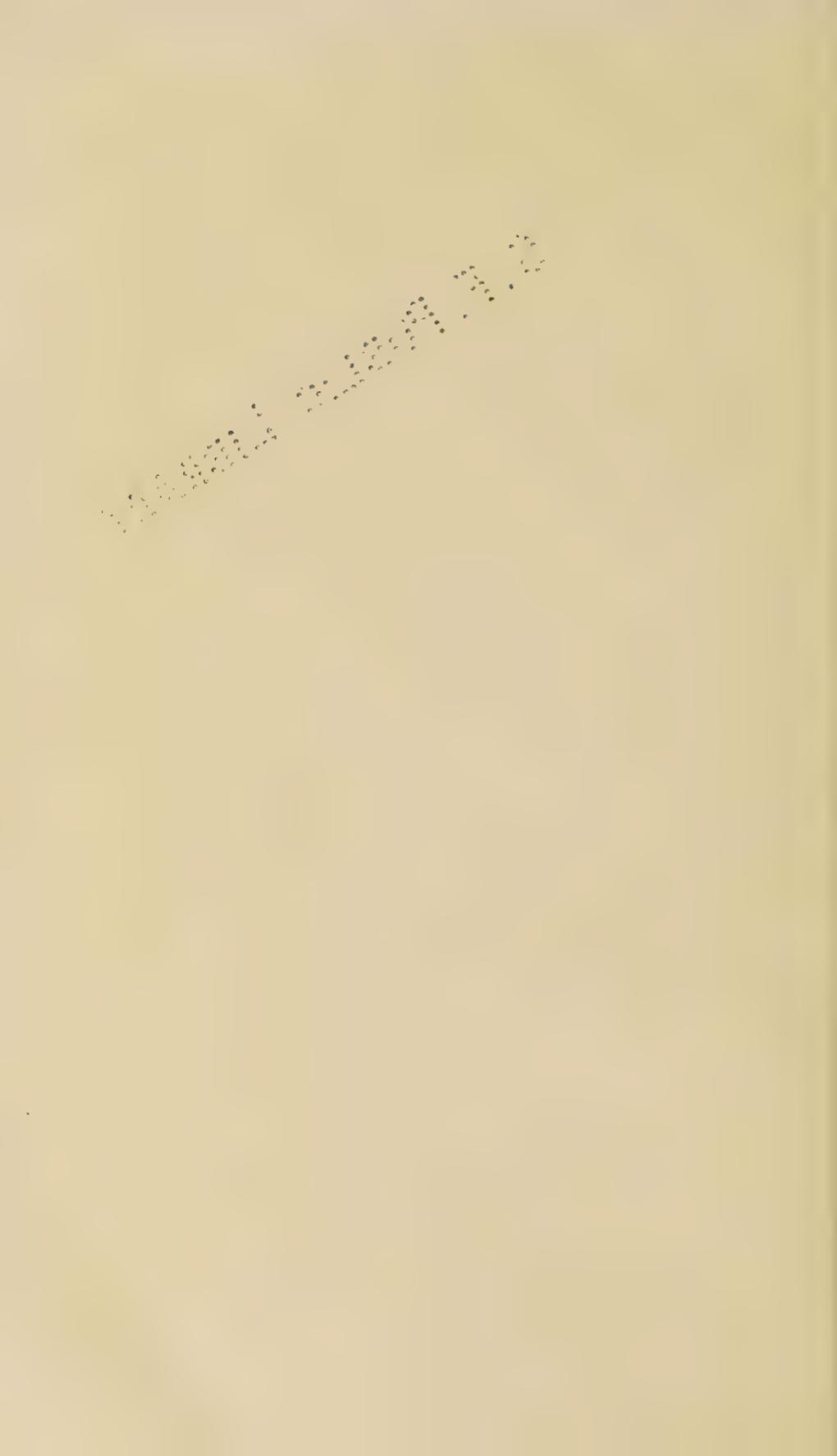
"I hope we may soon see each other. God does all for the best. Comfort *maman*. I will never forget you, and will always remain the same to you. You will find your father's estates very fine."

To her dear Countess she writes early in January : " My Mamma has given me permission to write to you, and I avail myself of it. This is my second letter.

"I assure you I pray night and morning for her who has had the kindness to guide and train me for ten years and whom I shall never forget, and I shall always be grateful and devoted to her, and talk of her often with my dear good mother. I will follow all the latter is so kind as to tell me, and it shall be my sweetest duty and I will never cause her any sorrow. She has kindly written to me that she will send on to you my letters. I am reading 'Plutarch for Youth,' by Rollin. By way of work I have finished the famous corset I meant for you and will send it to you, with Mamma's leave ; a knitted lace for my dear Mamma, and a bell-rope, and soon a purse. My health is good, and we go for a walk whenever we can. Madame Faber and Count Joseph Esterhy take such care of me that it is impossible to get ill. Please, I beg of you, tell Victoire not to



MARIA THERESA, EMPRESS OF AUSTRIA,  
Mother of Marie Louise.



make herself miserable. It pains me when I hear she is changed and thinks I shall not write to her any more."

To Victoire she wrote next day : "Each time I write to *maman* I will send you some lines. I hope you will console your *maman* instead of crying so yourself. Write to me of your occupations, describe your estate, and tell me of your health."

It was not till the middle of January that the Imperial family were back at Vienna, and Marie Louise was once more with her beloved parents. She writes to the Countess, still on her estates, the very next day. "Your letter gave me as much pleasure as mine to you. Mamma had the kindness to give it to me to-day before dinner, and with what pleasure I read it ! Yes, certainly I will often talk to Mamma about you, and she will be very willing to listen, and she will thus see a soft and grateful heart which will never forget the care you took of it during ten years." (Evidently the astute Countess was using the devotion of her late little charge as a lever wherewith to work herself back again into court favour.) "I promise you that I will occupy myself. Mamma has kindly told me she will give me books. I have already read the few I had with me ; with regard to the book entitled, 'Way of pleasing, or examination into suitable qualities for making oneself loved and esteemed,' by Campe, it is not here ; it must be at Baden, or Pesth, with all my other books. To-morrow I shall begin to make extracts from Rollin. I read it with great attention. After to-morrow I begin my lessons. I work a great deal, write and illuminate. Mamma will be kind enough to guide and advise me, and nothing will be more sweet to me than to follow the advice of a mother I adore so. We are all extremely well. What happiness to see my beloved parents again ! that alone consoles me for your

loss. They look very well. Leopoldine has grown since the measles. How like my dear friend to have been so anxious for Mamma ! I also was very worried ; that and my journeyings here made me grow four inches. The citizens received Papa with greatest joy and an emotion which was touching, and hurrahs, as the best of sovereigns deserves. I am lodged in my old quarters. I am also writing to Victoire, and can well imagine how sad a *Carnaval* she will spend. For myself, till the moment yesterday when I had the happiness of seeing my parents again, I have had no pleasures ; but that delight entirely makes up for the want of them. Adieu. Write to me every week at least ; I will do the same. Mamma will kindly give me all your letters, and I will do the same.”

Vienna, February 13, she writes gratefully for letters :

“ Yes, I repeat, I try to profit by the advice of my dear mother, and to imitate the example she gives me. I think of my dear governess and recall with gratitude the care and advice you gave me during ten years. I read much because you always recommended it as instructive and passing the time agreeably. After Rollin I have now read Zimmermann’s interesting journeys in Africa and the East Indies, in German. It would be good of Victoire to tell me what she is reading. I have also embroidered a portfolio for Papa, and I have begun another piece of work. I will write to you about it later ; it is a surprise for Mamma. In the evenings I knit a petticoat. I see you surprised that impatient Louise has begun such a long piece of work, but the idea that it is for Mamma gives me courage. We are all well, but in the city there is much sickness. I made my devotions last week. What a fine thing you did for that Russian !

But for Victoire your modesty would have concealed it from us. Forgive me if I scold you. Papa and Mamma admired it as much as we did. Any details you give are dear to me. I beg you to go on with them, all and everything that concerns you interests me. . . . Je suis pour toute la vie en vous priant de me répondre, chère amie.

“ Votre très-attachée amie,

“ LOUISE.”

The next twelve months were saddened by her mother's failing health. The troubles of her adopted country, the anxieties, the wanderings she had undergone, broke Marie Theresa's gay, brave spirit. In February 1807 she was expecting her ninth child, and she was only thirty-four. Feeling unable any longer to watch closely over Marie Louise, and, perhaps, with a presentiment of her approaching end, the Kaiserinn, for the third and last time, changed her *aja*. Countess Lazensky, *née* Falkenhagan, replaced Countess Faber. Marie Louise became devoted to her, and it was a bitter wrench when, as we shall see, immediately after her marriage, and when actually on the road to France, French intrigues separated them. Count Edling, an elderly man, became comptroller.

The Kaiserinn had arranged to go to the small, quiet palace at Hintzendorf for her confinement; the Kaiser was in Hungary. With Marie Louise and a younger daughter she was one day sitting in the Hofburg at Vienna, when the two girls, looking up, saw standing behind their mother's chair—we have Marie Louise's word for it—the dreaded White Lady, whose appearance in the Imperial palaces presages death alike to Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns.

A few days before she was to go to Hintzendorf the

Kaiserinn was suddenly seized with a chill, which developed rapidly into inflammation of the lungs. The baby was born prematurely, and lived but three days. The Kaiser only returned less than a week before his wife succumbed, on April 13, 1807.

Thus Marie Louise, just emerging from childhood, was left motherless at an age when she most needed maternal guidance, and a singularly devoted and affectionate family circle was broken up.

Sad indeed was the outlook for Kaiser Franz and his motherless children. Austria lay crushed in a numb neutrality ; Napoleon, his yoke firmly fixed on Prussia and South Germany, was turning his attention to conquering Spain, Portugal and Russia, was making and unmaking kings. After the defeat of the Russians at Friedland in the summer came the submission of the Czar, the meeting of the two Emperors, their warm, though short-lived friendship, and the Treaty of Tilsit left Austria isolated and helpless.

The bereaved husband clung to the companionship of his eldest girl, always his favourite daughter, and now growing apace into womanhood, and tall for her age. He took her with him on a little tour in Croatia. Here was in construction the famous post-road begun five years before and not completed till five years later. Passing over the mountains from Ogulin to Fiume, a distance of eighty-five miles, it rises to a height of 3,075 feet—by never more than ten inches in a yard—and is still one of the most remarkable engineering feats over passes, and forms the exit from Hungary to the sea. It was constructed by the Franzcanal Joint Stock Company and eventually named the Luisenstrasse.

The journey through the Banat—Croatia's Viceroy is called the Ban—interested and amused Marie Louise, “because,” she wrote to Victoire, “dear Papa instructed

me in many ways, though it was saddened by the familiar scenes which only recalled the terrible loss of our dear Mamma."

Other troubles followed. The delicate little brother Joseph did not long survive his mother. "The only comfort we have," writes Marie Louise, "is to think that had he been cured of this painful disease, his life would have been one continual suffering. He is happy in having found in heaven our dear Mamma, whose death still causes us much grief."

A week or two after his death an earthquake caused great damage at Schönbrunn and to the Imperial gardens at Laxenburg and in Hungary, casting a further gloom over this sad year. Marie Louise's careless, happy childhood was indeed over.

## CHAPTER III

### *THE SECOND FLIGHT*

K AISER FRANZ was a devoted husband, yet he was but a bad widower. Six months after his second wife's death he contemplated matrimony for the third time and became secretly engaged to the Archduchess Maria Ludovica Beatrix of Este. She was the daughter of Ferdinand, son of Kaiser Franz I. and of Maria Beatrix, last of the Estes and the heiress of Modena. They had been driven from their duchy by the French under Napoleon, and took refuge first at Trieste. Her sister, the Queen of Sardinia, had also been dispossessed of her kingdom and exiled to Cagliari; another sister, the Electress Palatine, had seen her possessions cut up by the conqueror. In 1805 the Estes came to Vienna, where the Duke died next year, and his wife and daughter lived much in retirement in the suburb of Wienel Neustadt. Maria Ludovica Beatrix was now twenty, small, *spirituelle*, dainty, and clever. All unknown to herself, Marie Louise became the go-between of her father and the attractive young Archduchess. The Kaiser drew them together.

It was a love match. In August they were secretly engaged, and Franz sent her his miniature set in diamonds in a bracelet. For her birthday in December he sent her, by Marie Louise, a large basket containing lace, a shawl, and some flowers, and a note inside. The

unsuspecting daughter told her father how touched the Archduchess seemed to be on reading the note. They were married the next month.

This event brought about a great change in Marie Louise's life. The new Kaiserinn at once took a quite maternal charge of her step-daughters. "Our children are well," she writes to her husband, "but Louise is much altered. I cannot tell you how many proofs of attachment she gives me." They dined with her, and she amused them, Marie Louise playing the piano while the others danced.

Into the Court at Vienna Maria Ludovica introduced more pomp and dignity. Whereas Franz had hitherto been popular as a *bon bourgeois*, he was now to beam and dazzle as the Kaiser. A fête was given to the invalid veterans who had never even beheld their ruler. As a reward, not for gallantry in the field, or distinction of birth, but for useful work, was instituted the Order of Leopold, which was bestowed on all classes. The aristocracy, which lived, or rather reigned, on their vast estates or in provincial capitals, aloof and jealous of their sovereign, were attracted to Vienna. The young Kaiserinn instituted court balls, at which all who were eligible were bound to appear, *Aufwartung*, in waiting, not by invitation. These entertainments began at six in the evening, and it was intimated that the guests were not to retire till their Imperial hosts had withdrawn. At these balls Marie Louise "came out." They were the only court festivities in which she took part till she appeared, the central figure, at those given for her marriage. Leopoldine, her next and favourite sister, was only fourteen, but of "an age," she writes, "when one begins to be reasonable."

The new regime was doubtless much appreciated by the young Archduchess. Her clever step-mother took

the shy young girl by the hand, and soon won immense influence over her, for weal and for woe. The new gaiety of the Court appealed to her age and lightheartedness. Weddings were the order of the day. That of her father had been followed by others in the Imperial family, and now another marriage, of European importance, began to be whispered about.

"Since the divorce of Napoleon," writes Marie Louise to Victoire de Poutet towards the end of January 1809, "I open each *Gazette de Frankfort* with the idea of finding the nomination of the new bride, and I confess this always causes me some involuntary anxiety. I place my fate in the hands of Divine Providence, who alone knows what can make us happy. But if ill-luck will have it, I am ready to sacrifice my private happiness to the good of the State, being convinced that one only finds real contentment in the doing of one's duty, even to the prejudice of one's inclination. I will not think about it any more, but, if necessary, I have made up my mind, though it should necessitate a double and painful sacrifice; pray that it may not come to pass."

The court of Este, the patron of Tasso, had always been artistic. To that of Vienna, the Kaiserinn Maria Ludovica now imparted a cultivated and also a scientific atmosphere. In music, indeed, Vienna was pre-eminent in Europe. Mozart had raised it to a pinnacle till then unknown, and Beethoven and "Papa Häydn" were still alive and creating. But, though Austria had many savants, they were of more account in Paris than in their native land. The new Kaiserinn was also fond of reading, and encouraged literature. Like Queen Louise of Prussia, she admired Lafontaine's novels. It was this, and her feelings for music and painting, that appealed to Marie Louise, and formed a bond between them. In her step-mother she found, at a most susceptible age,

a combination of a mother and elder sister, far cleverer than herself, and to her guidance, from inclination, as well as from family feeling towards the wife of the head of the house, Marie Louise committed herself.

The new Kaiserinn of Austria was a fierce antagonist of Napoleon, as had been not only her predecessor, but Queen Maria Theresa of Naples and Queen Louise of Prussia. She ruled Franz and spurred him on to war.

A grand tour throughout his diverse provinces undertaken by the Kaiser and his beautiful young bride fanned the faint flame of a rising patriotism. As the green shoots of the young gorse and heather spring bravely from among the blackened moors devastated by a heath-fire, so Austrian national feeling began to spread just when the heel of Napoleon seemed most firmly stamped all over the continent of Europe. The great aim of Stadion, now the State-Chancellor, was the liberation of Germany. Patriotism, as now exhibited in Spain and North Germany, animated both the Kaiser and all classes.

In February 1809 a mysterious proclamation to the people called the German Confederation to arms. Knowing the bulk of the French army busy in Spain, the Archduke Charles, appointed Commander-in-Chief, invaded Bavaria, the ally of France and ever the Naboth's vineyard of Austria. But Napoleon raced across Europe, defeated the Austrians at Eckmühl and Landshut, and the French entered Vienna for the second time only twenty-seven days after Napoleon had left Paris.

The Kaiser was in the field, and his family had again fled to Hungary—all but one. Marie Louise lay at the Burg suffering from an indisposition which prevented her for a few days from travelling. The city made a show of resistance. Napoleon at 8 p.m. on May 10 ordered

a bombardment. A few shells had fallen about the streets when it was represented to him that the young Archduchess still occupied the Burg. He gave orders that it should be respected, and Marie Louise, for the first, and not for the last time, probably realized that the ogre was not so black as he was painted. Napoleon, on the other hand, as he planned in the Kaiser's study at Schönbrünn how to dislodge Archduke Charles, entrenched just across the Danube, was surrounded by sketches done by the young Archduchess. A portrait of the Kaiser's favourite daughter—fair, young, and innocent—smiled down upon him. He had decided upon divorcing Josephine, and there were only two marriageable princesses of reigning houses in Europe—Anne of Russia and Marie Louise of Austria.

Napoleon was foiled at Essling by the Archduke Charles, and Marie Louise, from her refuge in the fortress palace at Buda, writes an enthusiastic if somewhat garbled account of the victory to the Countess Colloredo, who had again escaped to her estates.

“Though I believe that you receive all the news of the army sooner than we do; I cannot help writing to give you details of the issue of a battle which has been for us most fortunate. On Saturday, 21st, the French army, with Napoleon at its head, crossed the Danube, near Aspern, by four bridges, and made a terrible attack upon us, in which we received a little check ; night separated the combatants, and on the morning of the 22nd Napoleon, at the head of the cavalry, made a new attack and repulsed us again ; but at this moment Archduke Charles harangued the grenadiers, seized the flag in his hand, and, after having got off his horse, led them thus against the French, who took flight and abandoned Napoleon, who shouted to them that he would have them burnt along with the bridge, and killed with his own

hand two of his generals. On which they returned to the attack, but in vain ; fortune had forsaken them, they were completely beaten. The next day they made even a stronger attack, but with as little success, so that they retreated and threw themselves into the island of Lobau. It is the first time that Napoleon has been beaten in person. He has lost 22,000 men, and 16,000 wounded have been carried into Vienna. Lannes has been killed, Bessières has disappeared, Doronnel (*sic*) Espagne (*sic*) are prisoners, 46 guns, 1,500 men taken are the fruits of this day's work. We have only lost a few in proportion to his loss ; but we have fourteen or fifteen generals wounded, of whom only two dangerously ; but many colonels and officers killed. Archduke Charles was in such danger that all his aides-de-camp are wounded and his orderlies killed. They say Papa kept shouting : ' See if my brother is still alive ! ' May God preserve this excellent father, who also exposed himself many times, which made me shudder when I was told of it."

When walking in the Oreczy gardens at Buda, Marie Louise looked down on the bloated corpses of the French slain at Essling floating down the clear green stream of the swift Danube below. Though occupied with consoling her ailing step-mother, busying herself with lessons—Italian and drawing—yet her anxiety for the father to whom she was so pathetically devoted, of whom so blindly proud, was intense. Sadly she writes to Countess Colloredo :

" Take care of yourself and do not be anxious about the present state of affairs. I assure you that I am already hardened to stone, so much have I suffered over the war—the loss of brothers, sisters, mother. It seems as if our family were not made for happiness, and yet Papa has so well deserved it. One must hope that God, who is just, reserves for him a reward, and then,

as Mamma said, life is so short in comparison with eternity that it is easy to bear reverses. I am very grateful for the news you have kindly given me from Pressburg, Vienna, and the army, and I beg you to continue to do so. As I hear that this letter passes on the other side of the Danube, and that it is almost impossible that it should fall into the hands of the French, as I have hitherto feared, I am going to tell you what we know, venturing to count on your discretion. Papa and the Archduke Charles are still at Wölkersdorf, which I think very prudent, for he who has his back to the Danube has always the disadvantage. . . . We have also had news from Vienna, and among it some which gave me great pleasure : it is that the French officers have received the order to take off the badge of the Order of St. Andrew and not to wear it any more : which is a good sign for us, and perhaps a sweet illusion that I have ; but at least the Russians have not moved for six weeks, and remain on the frontier. I fear if our affairs go badly they will turn to the northward, especially as Caulaincourt has an absolute influence over the Emperor Alexander. I am very grateful to you for sharing my anxiety about Papa. It is more to be feared that he should risk himself too much than the contrary. The mere thought makes me shudder. Let us pray to God that He will preserve him for long years. We had to-day excellent news of his health, he only leaves Wölkersdorf to visit the hospitals which are in the country, which has so touched the French wounded that they have promised him not to fight against him any more. My one wish would be to see my father again, but as the good of the country depends on this separation, I gladly deprive myself of it. On the other hand we have very bad news : my uncle John has left his position at Güns to try and join the Palatine, which was an excellent plan ; but Eugene, who was at

Stein-am-Auger, warned by his spies of this move, came and attacked him. Only think! the bombardment has lasted three days, and no one knows anything for certain yet. I fear that my uncle, who has only 20,000 men and who is so brave and enterprising, will, of course, not retreat, and that in that case he will be entirely destroyed or dispersed. You have no idea how much I suffer in this uncertainty, all the more as the news has just come that the Viceroy wishes to get past the Archduke, that he is trying to reach Papa in order to strike the insurrection in the flank or the back, and that it is almost impossible for the Archduke, even with a forced march, to arrive there before him. The enemy may be here in a day. Of course at this news we leave at once, for it would not be unpleasant to them to effect the capture of the whole Imperial family, which would be worth at least as much to them as a country."

She was longing to see her father again, fearful lest the procrastinating Czar should join Napoleon, distraught by news of a three days' cannonade near Vienna. She heard that her uncle Charles could not stir to put down the Polish insurrection, and terrible rumours reached her of the atrocities committed by the French in the country districts, and of the Turks under the French doing much damage. She begs the Countess to fly to a town, but not where the Poles are likely to make a raid. Marie Louise was worn out with anxiety, and fainted away when the doctor merely suggested bleeding the sick Kaiserinn.

Archduke John, who had come up with his army from Italy, was making every effort to join his brother. "I wish," writes Marie Louise, "that uncle John and his army of the insurrection would deliver Vienna. I should then be so happy; it would be a balsam for all the afflictions my father has suffered, and his mind

would find in it its best reward." But John was closely pursued and molested by the Viceroy. His defeat at Raab and the fall of that town enabled Eugene to join Napoleon. This defeat rendered Buda no longer a safe refuge for the Imperial family. "The enemy may be here in a few days," writes Marie Louise, and they fled farther into Hungary, where that loyal people had risen in insurrection under the Archduke Rainer. The old walled town of Erlau, commanded by a castle which had often endured the siege of Turk and of Christian, offered a temporary refuge for Marie Louise and Leopoldine; the other brothers and sisters had safely reached Cracow. "We fled here on the defeat of uncle John," she writes, and Erlau "seems what Siberia is to the Russians. . . . I am living in continual anxiety, and I dare not trust any news. . . . We are relegated here, hearing no news from the rest of the world of what interests us, and which takes centuries to reach us. What we miss most is books. I had brought some from Buda. . . . The Empress is ill, but had a play and a reception, to keep up our spirits." Pressburg had been bombarded. "The Emperor was there, and that was why it was done." He had a narrow escape, a shell having passed through his room; "a night of agony till news came from him."

"I wish," she writes to the Countess, "that your prophecy may be realized; and that the house of Austria may rise from the decadence into which it is plunged; but I do not know what secret instinct makes me doubt it, and I have been several times ready to believe that we are nearing the end of the world and that he who oppresses us is the Antichrist."

The Archduchesses were very uncomfortable at Erlau. Marie Louise's women had one big room, she herself a panelled one where she slept and lived all day, "for

all furniture a table where I work, write, and draw, and another that the Countess drags everywhere with her, a bath, two torn sofas and four chairs all full of horrid bugs ; and Leopoldine has the same." But the girls found pretty walks in the neighbourhood.

Thus, in tension, the sky blackening overhead, passed June. With July came the thunderclap of Wagram, and old "Father Häydn" passed away while the French guns were firing, playing his "Long live Franz, the Kaiser!"

## CHAPTER IV

### *THE NET IS THROWN*

FOR the third time Napoleon was master of the fate of Austria. British support had failed her ; Prussia proved a broken reed ; Russia was on her eastern frontier ; the Poles occupied Bohemia. Austria was pressed all round. Yet, within a week of the victory of Wagram, Napoleon granted an armistice. Was it a simple act of generosity, or had he an ulterior motive ?

The French armies remained in the positions they had won, Napoleon returned to Schönbrunn, and a congress gathered at the village of Altenburg to discuss terms of peace. Count Metternich, who was Austrian ambassador at Paris, was brought back to Vienna by French gendarmes to represent his country.

The negotiations at Altenburg preliminary to the Peace of Vienna are enveloped in a mystery greater than that which usually surrounds such parleyings. Never was a congress less independent, never did one discuss less. Every clause was referred to Schönbrunn. The Austrian delegates came in daily to lunch with Napoleon and then returned to Komorn, where the Kaiser had his headquarters. The latter shilly-shallied for a week, arousing the victor's scorn. " If there were but an Emperor on whose good faith I could rely," he said to Metternich, " I would make the whole monarchy Austrian and cut off nothing. But the Emperor Francis



MARIA BEATRIX LUDOVICA, EMPRESS OF AUSTRIA,  
Step-mother of Marie Louise.



s always of the opinion of the last man who has talked to him. . . . If he would abdicate in favour of the Grand-Duke of Würzburg I would cut off nothing."

Bausset, comptroller of Napoleon's household, closely watching the faces of his master and his guests during these luncheons at Schönbrunn, fancied he had discovered the secret of these mysterious confabs. It appeared to him that no serious diplomatic questions were afoot or were discussed. Daily the delegates became more harmonious and seemed to come to a better understanding. Napoleon was gracious and full of politeness. He evidently wished to make a good impression and to show off his manners and his person to best advantage. Only one day was he irritated, telling the Prince of Neufchâtel afterwards that he would send for the Duke of Würzburg and give him the crown of Austria. Napoleon was no longer the same man who, in a fit of insolent bravado, had contemptuously shattered the Dresden vase at Cobenzel's feet at the Campo Formio conference. Despite the presence in a snug nest in a suburb of the Emperor's beloved and loving Countess Walewska, astute Bausset considered, rightly or not, that he divined in Napoleon's attitude his dawning project of a marriage with the Kaiser Franz's eldest daughter.

The latter was still at Erlau, very uncomfortable and almost afraid to write to her friend Victoire Poutet "for fear of letters falling into the hands of the French, like Grandmamma's [the Queen of Naples], whose letters to Aunt Toto had all appeared in the *Moniteur*," but altered, Marie Louise surmised, "as they only contained abuse of Napoleon, which certainly Grandmamma would not have written." Rumours false and true reached her, of Metternich being nearly captured as he came from Paris, of loss of friends and relations, of the outrages of the French "who will draw down the curse of Heaven

upon them by their cruelty and sacrilege." Intermixed was news of Italian operas at Vienna, Talma and Crescentini performing, while the Imperial riding-school and the *salles de redoutes* were turned into hospitals for the wounded, and were full. Then, in the midst of this troubled exile, came Leopoldine's first communion "the great day of her life," writes her dearest sister "Mamma is preparing her for it." The Kaiserinn was now sending to Cracow for the other brothers and sisters, and the baggage, as so many things were missed at Erlau, "especially books, and uncle Rudolph has only one coat."

When the truce was granted the Empress rejoined the Emperor, whom Marie bewails not having seen for four months. But lessons, especially those of French, and the *clavecin*, "to break one's fingers," were interrupted by the solemnities of Leopoldine's first communion.

In August better news came from Spain to Erlau. The Spaniards, she heard, had taken Madrid, and Soult had capitulated with 16,000 men (*sic*). Marie Louise hastened to pass it on to her friend, together with accounts of the life at Schönbrünn of the ogre, who, it was reported, had only once dared to show himself in Vienna, driving through it at a gallop. While there were theatricals at Schönbrünn, she wrote, and a French company at the Court Theatre, all the city—convents, hospitals, and even the Burg Schloss—were crowded with wounded, some 69,000, including no less than thirty-five generals.

Bubna had been sent to compliment Napoleon on his name-day. Marie Louise is glad "Mamma is not at Erlau, for I am sure if he [Napoleon] had also out of politeness complimented Mamma for her name-day . . . rage would eat me up if I had to dine with one of his marshals. . . . I wish I could, like you, keep silence all

my life on politics, for I hear enough, and even too much, on this matter during this summer. My heart forms wishes that my wish may be realized ; but I have suffered too much to expect such bliss."

The terror and horror of the ogre was increasing. She hopes the congress to discuss peace "will take place far from the place where Mamma and I am staying, for I should otherwise fear a visit, and I assure you to this person it would be a torture even worse than all the martyrs, and I do not know if it would not enter his head. He makes war, real war, after the manner of the Huns."

Then came rumours of peace. Austria was to pay 200,000,000 thalers and to keep her territories. Burying herself "in her little room in order not to fall a prey to sad thoughts," the unconscious object of Napoleon's designs, reads "*Esther*," "*Athalie*," "*Iphigénie*." "I find the second the best. If you have insomnia," she adds, with a glint of fun, "read the '*Familiengemälde*' of *Lafontaine*. I do not know a novel more *fade*." Marie Louise evidently did not share the admiration of her step-mother and of Queen Louise of Prussia for the then fashionable novelist.

Though pleased and grateful for the pleasant entertainments provided at Erlau for the Imperial children—fishing and tea-parties, illuminations on Marie Louise's name-day—by her step-uncle the Archbishop, and developing a "real passion for Hungary, with its harmonious language, and touched by the way they treat us," she remained a true *Wienerkind* and was desperately homesick. "My heart yearns for Vienna, the abode of my happy childhood. I am drawn towards it. Everything that comes from thence causes me such a sweet joy, and, though I am no mineralogist, I have bought a piece of stone that they have brought me, and which is a little piece of the pavement of that dear town."

Marie Louise's love of her native city never left her all her life. Now, as ever, music was a great solace and interest. "I sing a great deal with Wiesenthal, which procures for me very pleasant evenings ; nothing is finer than to hear Count Edling sing : 'Che faro senza Eurydice.' I wish you could hear him."

The peace conference was moved to Vienna. "Every one," writes Marie Louise, "is being entertained at the expense of poor Papa." There were illuminations to celebrate Napoleon's fête-day, "but others," she adds, "show their attachment to their sovereign, as, 'Es lebe der Kaiser,' without saying which," and again :

O Napoleon, wie gross is Dein Glanz !  
Lass uns aber unsern lieber Kaiser Franz.

To while away the dreary waiting at Erlau, she composed variations and waltzes. Kotzbuch, her music-master, had had a son wounded and she missed his lessons. On Sundays she gave lessons on the *clavecin* to Leopoldine ; she sang with Wiesenthal, and had a logic-master. Early in September the Primate, her uncle, the Kaiserinn's brother, died of typhoid caught in the hospitals. "Happily, Mamma was ill and could not nurse him." She tells Victoire how the hospitals are full of court employés, chiefly stablemen ; how none of the proud Viennese aristocracy go to the opera, produced with such *éclat* by the conqueror, who, however, had reinforced his garrison and commandeered the Archbishop's plate and wine. But there were grains of comfort. The English were disembarking and making raids in Germany and at Naples ; affairs in Spain were going badly for the French. Later, a most affectionate letter from the homesick exile to the Countess Colloredo who had ventured to return to Vienna, braves the dangers of intercepted communications.

But the attempt by the Ravaillac of German liberty upon the conqueror's life at a review at Schönbrunn opened Napoleon's eyes to the hatred with which he was regarded in Germany. Now he would be trifled with no longer, and he sent an ultimatum to the Kaiser. The latter, in his extremity, turned to his old minister Thugut, now living in retirement. "Make peace at any price," was the far-seeing reply. "The existence of the Austrian monarchy is at stake; the dissolution of the French Empire not far off."

But the price of peace was not that contemplated by the veteran statesman. It was not only the loss of 50,000 square miles, and of 4,000,000 inhabitants—it was also Marie Louise.

The Peace of Vienna was signed on October 14; a Te Deum at St. Stephen's was attended by the officials of the city. On the 27th Napoleon was back at Fontainebleau, and a Te Deum was sung at Notre Dame. It was Josephine's last public appearance. The plot was thickening, the meshes being tightened.

Marie Louise rejoined her step-mother at Bicska. The latter had felt very much the death of her brother, the Primate of Hungary. She was ill: "If the doctors could make out her illness they would be very clever. One day she is so weak she cannot walk two steps without fainting," writes Marie Louise; "next day she dances a reel which lasts an hour and a half."

At last, after a separation of months, Marie Louise had seen the "best of fathers," at Bicska. "Think," she writes to Victoire de Poutet: "he did not know that I was coming, and I had no idea of his arrival, so my happiness was complete. He must have found me very silly, for instead of answering him I began to cry. The shock had so bereft me of speech, and all our past sufferings came back to me when I saw him." Any

return to the Burg Schloss at Vienna was out of the question for the Imperial family till the spring, for she writes that it had to be thoroughly cleaned after so much illness in it. At Buda life was sad enough, the town full of 15,000 soldiers and "one meets carts full of dead ones." Her uncle the Palatine, probably anxious to give the girl a fresh distraction after so much worry, induced her to take up oil-painting. She made a sketch of the burial-place of the Palatines of Hungary—"a cave, with a chapel below, between arid hills, and which is in charge of a Russian Pope, who cultivates the garden round." She was tempted also to try a portrait, that of Count Edling, the delightful singer. "I hear you maliciously suggest," she writes to Victoire, "that the original is not handsome, but it is just in *le laid* that one can well study the art of portraiture."

The anxiety of the winter had shattered the Kaiserinn's nerves. In order to distract her, Marie Louise made music every evening with her uncles, besides practising an hour or more daily, studying sonatas, and she begs her friend to send her some of her music from Kotzbuch's, any she likes, and to buy her Yadin's "Duo pour deux Pianofortes, dédié à Madame Bonaparte." "I think this latter name will prevent you sending it me, but, in spite of the dedication, I cannot help finding the composition charming."

She longed to see the Kaiser's entry into Vienna, "and all the marks of attachment to their good sovereign, who deserves them so much." Napoleon, at Fontainebleau, heard of Francis's enthusiastic reception. "What a people!" he exclaimed. "If I re-entered Paris, I should not be received in that manner!" From afar the devoted daughter regrets that she could not mingle her tears with those of the good Viennese. "I assure you that, if I was only a private person, I should be proud of being an

Austrian, for they are certainly the people who come first in their devotion to their sovereign. In reading your description I felt very sad in thinking that I could not share the happiness of the Viennese, and, at the same time, be at the feet of the best of fathers."

A sad Christmas for Marie Louise at Buda. Separated from her father, she was very anxious about her step-mother's health. There was a large family party at Buda, and peace and intimacy—six young uncles and step-uncles under thirty, little dances, duets on two pianos, painting lessons in portraiture and landscape for Marie Louise, an accompanying by the latter of the Kaiserinn's brother Francesco's songs on the *clavecin*.

Maria Ludovica now attempted to make up a match between this brother Francesco, *de jure* Duke of Modena, and her eldest step-daughter. In after years, Marie Louise told her great friend, Lady Burghersh, that what really reconciled her to marrying Napoleon was the dread of this marriage with the despicable Francesco she so disliked, and who was to be known by his subjects as "the butcher," "the hangman." But Maria Ludovica could twist her step-daughter round her little finger. Marie Louise was secretly coerced into willingness to the match, and induced to write to her father and tell him so. The Kaiser, however, came to the rescue. Francesco was a landless wanderer. "I have nothing," said Franz, "you have nothing, your brother has nothing, and the girl has nothing!"

The *Carnaval*—which in Austria begins with the Christmas festivities—was dull, "no one wished to dance." Marie Louise occupied herself with reading serious books: "*L'Esprit de l'Histoire*," by Ferrand, the German poets, admiring Kleist and his epigrams, and amused herself teasing Count Edling, when she played his accompaniments, by improvising harmonies. Meanwhile, all unknown to her,

various personages were machinating her fate, and six bare weeks settled the match with the Emperor.

Whether or no Napoleon, when at Vienna, had considered the possibility of a marriage with the Austrian Archduchess, certain it is that, on his return to Paris, he had decided to divorce Josephine. But he had more than one string to his bow. At his interview at Erfurt with the Czar he had broached the subject of a marriage with the latter's sister Anne. From the point of view of diplomacy it was the wisest match. Austria was conquered and humbled ; Russia had only been scotched, and was now being cajoled by an alliance which the marriage would cement. So, in November, the French ambassador was bidden to seek a private audience with the Czar, whom he found agreeable to the project. But his mother, the Dowager-Empress, was against it. She had already lost two daughters in childbirth, and hesitated to sacrifice a third—Anne was only sixteen. Russia did not receive Napoleon's proposal with avidity. It took six weeks for couriers to bring replies from Petersburg to Paris. Napoleon was, as ever, impatient of delay, and unaccustomed to being dallied with.

Moreover, a great mind was stealthily directing his attention to the Austrian match. Though Napoleon's Empire now extended from the Atlantic to Turkey, though Austria lay crushed under his heels, the defeat of Wagram and the Treaty of Vienna had but kindled more fiercely than ever Austrian national feeling against him. But her policy, after her great effort and her failure, was now one of calculation, and Austrian rather than German. Stadion, who had dreamed of the emancipation of Germany, was replaced by Count Metternich, a brilliant young diplomatist of the eighteenth-century type. As ambassador at Paris he had not only worked well for his country, but contrived to become a *persona grata* to

Napoleon, as well as the lover of his sister Caroline, the Queen of Naples. Indispensable now to Austria, after his services at the peace conference, he easily took the reins out of Franz's weak hands. Calm and penetrating, he perceived that Napoleon would give no peace till crushed, and conceived the idea of attaining his object by a French alliance. He saw that the Russian marriage would place Austria between the hammer and the anvil, at the mercy of two great empires. While Russia hesitated Metternich began to pull his strings.

All the diplomatic circles in Paris were talking of Napoleon's marriage, and one evening, at a gathering of officials, all made conjectures as to the possible bride. Delaborde, a member of the Chamber of Deputies during the Revolution, and on Schwarzenberg's staff during the war, incited by Bassano, launched his arrow at a venture. Schwarzenberg, now Austrian ambassador at Paris, took up the cue so promptly that it was plain he had already considered the question. It was agreed that a few days later should the offer be made.

Josephine was holding what was to be her last reception. At its close, as the guests stood waiting for their carriages, Sémonville, an influential senator, whilom ambassador at the Hague, found himself beside Floret, a young Secretary of the Austrian Embassy, who had been his intimate friend at the Dutch capital. All the world imagined the Russian match settled when Sémonville suddenly attacked his neighbour.

"Well, well, that's over and the affair now settled ! Why wouldn't you have it ? "

"Who told you we wouldn't have it ? " retorted Floret.

"People said so. Might it have been a mistake ? "

"Perhaps."

"What? You would be disposed—*you*, perhaps; but the ambassador?"

"I can answer for the Prince Schwarzenberg."

"But Count Metternich?"

"No difficulties."

"But the Emperor?"

"None either."

"And the Empress, who hates us?"

"You don't know her; she is ambitious, and will be brought round to it."

Sémonville at once went and retailed these interesting remarks to his friend the Duke of Bassano, who, on his side, carried them to Napoleon. The latter was radiant, but not surprised. He said he had received news of the same gist from Vienna.

It was in that city, at a little dinner at Metternich's, with the old Prince de Ligne, the favourite of Marie Antoinette, the Kaiser's aunt, and Count Lamark, Mirabeau's confidant, that the Count de Narbonne, who was passing through Vienna on his way to take up a diplomatic appointment at Munich, broached the subject of the Austrian match. He demonstrated how no peace could be of permanent duration that was only political; that nothing but a domestic alliance would stop Napoleon's conquering career, and that Austria would be badly advised if she threw herself into the arms of Russia. Narbonne's advice coincided with the policy that Metternich was tracing out. When the former was received next morning by the Kaiser in private audience Franz let him perceive that he would consider an offer for his daughter's hand, and Narbonne fostered his inclination by showing him how Napoleon could thus be bridled and tamed, and would work for the welfare of both the nations in concert with such a wise and virtuous father-in-law. The diplomat promptly despatched the

report of this interview to Fouché at Paris, for the Emperor's eye.

Meanwhile there had come no decided answer from Petersburg. The Czar asked for time, and his mother seemed obdurate. A second despatch was sent off begging for a reply. Napoleon chafed at the delay, and matters were at a standstill. Strange to say, the knot was cut by the divorced Empress herself. Women, matchmakers *par excellence*, succeeded when men seemed at a loss.

On January 2 Josephine sent for the Countess Metternich, who had stayed on in Paris during the war. The granddaughter of Kaunitz, the State-Chancellor, she was very popular at Court. On arrival at Malmaison, and while waiting for the Ex-Empress to receive her, Queen Hortense astonished the Countess by appearing, and exclaiming with effusion : " You know we are all Austrian at heart, but you'll never guess that my brother has been bold enough to advise the Emperor to ask for your Archduchess ! "

Her mother also received Countess Metternich without any beating about the bush. " I have a project which preoccupies me entirely," said Josephine, " and the success of which gives me hope that the sacrifice I have just made may not be entirely wasted. It is that the Emperor should marry your Archduchess. I spoke to him about it yesterday, and he told me that his choice was not yet fixed. But I think it would be, if he were sure of being accepted by you ! "

In the course of conversation she came back several times to the subject. " Yes, yes, we must try and arrange it ! " She lamented that she was no longer in Paris, or she would have brought the affair off, adding : " You must make your Emperor see that his ruin and that of his country is certain, unless he consents to this

marriage. It is perhaps the only way to prevent Napoleon from making a rupture with the Holy See."

Countess Metternich instantly posted off this news to her husband. The following Sunday she was to be presented to the Emperor at his reception, on the conclusion of peace. The latter, delighted to see her again, was all graciousness, and let fall these enigmatic words: "Monsieur de Metternich has the first post in the Austrian monarchy; he knows this country well, and he might be of use to it."

Faint rumours of these machinations leaked through to their innocent object, sitting quietly painting and making music in the fortress palace at Buda. She flared up with insulted dignity. On January 10 she writes to Victoire that Kotzbuch, the music-master, had evidently been gossiping. "I seem to see him talking about the separation of Napoleon from his wife, and I even seem to hear him naming me as her successor; but in that he is mistaken, for Napoleon is too afraid of a refusal and too anxious to do us further harm, to make such an offer." Then she adds, with the touching filial trust that never left her, "and Papa is too good to force me on a point of such importance."

To the Countess Colloredo she wrote on the day but more guardedly. "If only Papa would come back once! but his departure (from Vienna) is postponed from day to day." The Empress was ill again. "I think all these towns are alike. Buda is like Vienna, and no one talks of anything but Napoleon's divorce. I hear them all talk, and don't worry myself at all, only pity the poor princess whom he chooses, for I am sure that it will not be me who will become the victim of politics."

Still no answer from Russia. Napoleon flattered himself he had *l'embarras du choix*, and that two Emperors

and a King were vying for the honour of a matrimonial alliance with him. On January 21 he convened, after Mass, a council at the Tuileries of the great dignitaries of the Empire. It was on the very day that, seventeen years before, the King of France, married to an Austrian Archduchess, had perished on the scaffold, that they sat discussing the respective merits of the Russian, Saxon, or Austrian match. Some of the members, notably Cambacérès, the Arch-Chancellor, favoured the Russian, for the bare idea of a war with that country made him tremble. Austria, on the other hand, was powerless. "I am aware," said the Arch-Chancellor, "that the Emperor knows the way to Vienna well, but I am not so sure that he would find that to St. Petersburg."

The month of January wore on and nothing was decided one way or the other. On the 27th Metternich wrote to his wife: "*Madame l'Archiduchesse* is, as is right, quite ignorant of the steps which are being taken about her. . . . But our princesses are so little accustomed to choosing their husbands with regard to their own feelings, also the respect which such a well-brought-up and good child as the Archduchess bears to the will of her father induces me to hope that I shall not encounter any obstacle with her."

Marie Louise already felt the net tightening round her, for four days previously she had written to her dear Victoire: "I know that they at Vienna are already marrying me with the great Napoleon, and I hope it will go no further than talk, and I am much obliged to you, dear Victoire, for your fine wishes on the subject. I am making counter-wishes that it may not come to pass, and if it had to be I think I should be the only one who would not rejoice at it."

This letter should have completely refuted the court gossip of the moment, that Marie Louise, grateful to

Napoleon for having spared her during the bombardment of Vienna, was inclining favourably towards him.

At last, on February 6, came the long-expected despatch from the Czar, dated a fortnight after the expiration of the time given for a reply, and even now he decided nothing. Though the Dowager-Empress had given way, the Grand-duchess Anne insisted on retaining her religion, and the Czar mixed up politics with the marriage conditions. Further, Napoleon, on inquiry found the Grand-duchess too young for marriage. On receipt of the despatch he abruptly broke off the negotiations. He ordered the Duc de Cadore to send off a courier to Petersburg giving up the marriage to be followed shortly by another announcing the Austrian engagement. "I have decided for *l'Autrichienne*. Bring me," he added, "the contract between Louis XVII and *l'historique* Marie Antoinette. Write to-night to Prince Schwarzenberg to make an appointment for to-morrow morning."

The Austrian ambassador, who had no notion that things would move so quickly, was in a dilemma. His instructions were not cut and dried, he was only to act provisionally. "The Kaiser," wrote Metternich, "would never force his beloved daughter to a match she might abhor." (!) Moreover, Schwarzenberg was to clench, as far as he could, the advantages France should offer to Austria as the conditions of such a marriage. However, he did not hesitate long. He burnt his ships; for, at any moment, a courier might arrive from Petersburg bringing a definite acceptance from the Czar. The marriage contract was signed the next morning, February 7, 1810, at the Tuileries.

It was an almost literal copy of the marriage contract of Marie Antoinette signed forty years before. Strange that Napoleon did not see, not only the bad taste, but

also the evil augury, of thus taking that of her unfortunate great-aunt as a precedent for that of Marie Louise. Yet he had expressed himself with more than usual chivalry about the ill-fated Queen, when the Austrian match was being discussed at the Council. "King Louis XVI.," he remarked, "probably only got his deserts, but to execute a woman—a queen, who only shares the honours, and none of the responsibilities of the throne!"

Floret was promptly despatched with letters to Metternich explaining the causes which had led to the hurry in concluding the contract, and Schwarzenberg begged that he might be thoroughly supported in what he had done. "I pity the Princess, it is true, but let her nevertheless not forget that it is very noble to give peace to such worthy nations, and to establish herself as the guarantee of tranquillity and general repose."

The court of the Tuileries was in ecstasy. Napoleon, learning the Vienna waltz, and sending for his tailor to "fit him properly," imagined that he had never gained such a triumph, and Paris, not unprepared, was delighted at the news. At Vienna, however, it burst like a bombshell. The Russian Minister was "literally petrified." It leaked out at a ball at a Russian house, and the dancing at once ceased. In the streets the passers-by stopped each other, asking, "Is it possible?" But, with the volatile Viennese, surprise almost immediately gave place to joy beyond description. The Funds went up by leaps and bounds. Business men saw that the union made for peace and for a return to prosperity; the army hoped, with such allies, to regain its old prestige. Metternich, at the height of joy and satisfaction, wrote to his wife :

"All Vienna is busy only over the marriage. It would be difficult to realize the energy that all this has given to public spirit, and the extreme popularity of the affair.

If I were the saviour of the world I could not receive more congratulations or compliments on the part I am supposed to have taken. Among the honours which will be given, I shall have the 'Golden Fleece.' . . . The fêtes will be very splendid, and if it were necessary to find the things for them at the world's end, everything would be there. . . . The new Empress will be popular at Paris, and should please by her great sweetness and simplicity. Rather plain than pretty in the face, she has a very fine figure, and when she is dressed up a little she will do very well. I have begged her hard to have a dancing-master directly she arrives, and not to dance before she can dance well. She has the greatest wish to please, and with such a wish one does please."

The court of Austria intended to arrange the marriage with all magnificence. Knowing Napoleon to be such a stickler for etiquette and ceremony, the archives were ransacked for accounts of the marriage of the great Louis, and the royalists of the old regime of the court of Versailles were consulted. But as the marriage was considered superior to that of Marie Antoinette, or any Dauphiness, for Marie Louise the numbers of her household were doubled, and the representatives of the noblest families chosen for her suite, headed by Prince Trautmannsdorf himself as Grand Chamberlain. The Kaiser ordered that all the honours and ceremonies paid to the Kaiserinn at his latest marriage were to be rendered to his daughter at the marriage ceremony. He was so delighted with the match that he chatted about it even to private people, openly regretting that he had been dragged into the late war, which would not have been the case, he averred, had he known the magnanimity and loyalty of Napoleon !

The Kaiserinn, lately so furiously anti-French, had now quite come round, and "was extremely favourable

to the marriage. In spite of the bad state of her health, she has declared that she wishes to be at all the fêtes."

Thus the French ambassador, writing home a glowing account of the Court and Austria in general, and of Marie Louise in particular, which must have greatly pleased his master. "Every one is agreed that Madame *l'Archiduchesse* joins to a very sweet disposition common sense and all the talents brought forth by a careful education. She is generally liked at Court and greeted as a model of sweetness and kindness; has a good appearance, without the least affectation, modesty without embarrassment, speaking well in several languages, and knowing how to combine a dignified bearing with much affability. On entering the *grand monde*, which she has hardly yet seen, her good qualities will doubtless further develop and impart to her person even more graciousness and interest. She is tall and well-made, and enjoys excellent health. Her features seemed to me regular and full of sweetness.

"The town is entirely occupied about the great marriage, for which preparations are beginning. All eyes are fixed exclusively on *Madame l'Archiduchesse*. . . . Every one is delighted to hear that she is in the best possible spirits, and does not hide the satisfaction the alliance gives her.

"Never has public opinion been pronounced in a more startling and unanimous manner. The Funds go up in the most astonishing way . . . many people have difficulty in selling their gold. . . . Many people who had retained their plate, in the hope of hiding it or sending it to a foreign country, hurry to take it to the mint and look upon the scrip given in exchange as so much current coin. The heads of the great families order plate to replace that which they had to sacrifice for the State. Every one is ready to give all their fortune, being

assured that, after such an alliance, the Government could not again fail to meet their obligations. Russians and Prussians are at a discount, the French adored."

And the grass not yet green upon the field of Wagram!

But what of the feelings of Marie Louise herself? "Madame l'Archiduchesse," wrote Metternich, "only saw in the hints given her by her august father as to the possibility of Napoleon's extending his views to her the means of proving to her beloved parent her most absolute devotion. She feels the full extent of the sacrifice, but her filial affection overpowers all other considerations."

"The Minotaur," wrote Lord Castlereagh, "demanded the sacrifice of an Austrian maiden."

Years afterwards General Trobiand, afterwards distinguished in the American Civil War, heard her say at Venice: "I have been sacrificed!"

In later years Marie Louise told her English friend, Lady Burghersh, that it was a mistake to think that she had been coerced into the marriage with Napoleon, that her father had given her perfect liberty of action, though putting before her the great advantage it would be for the country. She also had a good deal of curiosity to see the great man, and Paris, and so on; so that, on the whole, she went quite willingly.

Metternich left it to the father to decide the daughter's fate. But Franz replied: "It is my daughter that I order to decide, as I shall never coerce her. I wish to hear, before considering my duty as sovereign, what she means to do."

Fearful of influencing her in any way, he sent Metternich to her with the fateful message. The great diplomat did not beat about the bush, but went straight to the point.

"The Archduchess," he writes, "listened with her usual calmness, and, after a moment's reflection, asked : 'And what are my father's wishes ?' 'The Kaiser,' I replied, 'has charged me to ask your Imperial Highness what decision she intends to take in circumstances in which the whole future of her life is at stake. Do not ask what the Emperor wishes ; tell me what you wish yourself.' 'I only wish what my duty commands me to wish. When it is a question of the interests of the Empire, it is he who must be consulted, not my will. Beg my father only to do his duty as sovereign, and not to subordinate it to my personal interest'—words which formed, indeed, her motto for the rest of her father's life."

## CHAPTER V

### *THE FIRST SACRIFICE*

THE first of the three marriage ceremonies which made Marie Louise Empress of the French was to take place on March 11 at Vienna ; but there was nearly a slip 'twixt cup and lip. Three days after signing the marriage contract and announcing to his Council that any son and heir of his was to be called the King of Rome and hold his court there, Napoleon annexed the States of the Church. It was naturally, therefore, out of the question that the Pope, a prisoner at Savona, hurling curses against the usurper, would pronounce the divorce between Napoleon and Josephine. In the eyes of the Church this could be ratified by him alone. So Napoleon threw the responsibility of deciding if the diocesan officials of Paris were competent to pronounce it upon his pliant uncle, Cardinal Fesch, and an ecclesiastical committee. Notwithstanding the fact that the Cardinal had himself given Napoleon and Josephine the belated nuptial benediction in 1804, and that Napoleon had selected him to solemnize his marriage with Marie Louise, Fesch lent himself to such quibbles as the absence of witnesses, of the parish clergy, of Napoleon's final consent, in virtue of which the two tribunals, diocesan and metropolitan, pronounced the nullity of Josephine's marriage. Their decision was sent to Otto, ambassador at Vienna. To quiet the Kaiser's conscience—for the Hapsburgs are nothing if not orthodox

—he mentioned the decision to him, and then, three days after the ratification of the marriage contract, despatched the documents back to Paris, “having a presentiment of the discussions they might occasion on the part of the foreign ecclesiastics.” But the French *émigré* clergy at Vienna worked upon the Archbishop who was to perform the marriage by proxy there, and, rather late in the day, the latter began to have qualms as to the legality of Josephine’s divorce. Otto was in a dilemma. For the ambassador extraordinary was already *en route* to claim the bride. The Archbishop stiffened, and demanded to see the documents. Days and nights were spent by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in endeavouring to conciliate him; the Kaiser grew anxious. Finally, Otto swore on his word of honour, and signed and sealed, that he had seen the decrees, which were conformable both to the civil and ecclesiastical laws of France, and thus a marriage, begun in intrigue, was completed by double-dealing.

With the brilliant ending of the *Carnaval* coincided the entry into Vienna of the sovereign prince of Neufchâtel, husband of Princess Maria Elizabeth of Bavaria, Vice-Constable of France, *Grand Veneur*, head of the first cohort of the Legion of Honour, Marshal Berthier, one of Napoleon’s oldest friends his companion in arms, sent to fetch his bride. To depute the bearer of such a purloined title was questionable taste, but he held the highest rank in France after the Emperor, and Vienna did not stand on its dignity. While London was sad, and Louis XVIII. in despair, Berthier, received at the gates by Count Paul Esterházy as a sovereign prince, was acclaimed by the volatile population with enthusiasm.

Ash-Wednesday and the three days after “were consecrated to devotion,” wrote Otto. “Then all Vienna buzzed with excitement and joy. The fêtes

are the same as at the Kaiser's recent marriage. Painters work day and night to make decorations, every morning thousands press to see the Archduchess come out of Mass. Her portraits are in great demand. The Kaiser and the Archdukes do not miss a single *redoute*, where the crowd surround them and the masks say pleasant things to them. One would say that this alliance augments the popularity of the Kaiser, which is already great."

When Berthier was presented to the Kaiserinn the latter spoke prettily of her step-daughter, "and that young princess talked to us with great interest of France, of Paris, and of the arts which she hoped to cultivate in that interesting place."

Franz replied to Napoleon's letters sent by Count Lauriston. "In depositing in your hands, *M. mon frère*, the fate of my beloved daughter, I give Your Majesty the strongest proof of esteem and confidence which I can bestow upon him. There are moments when the holiest of affections overpowers all other considerations. May Your Imperial Majesty find in this letter only the expression of the feelings of a father, whom eighteen years of a sweet intimacy have knitted to a child whom Providence has endued with every quality which makes for domestic happiness. Removed from me, she will only continue worthy of my unremitting affection in so far as she contributes to the happiness of a husband whose throne she is about to share, and to the happiness of her subjects."

The Kaiserinn wrote: "The tender devotion of the best of fathers to his favourite child does not need any support. Our wishes are identical. I repose the same confidence as he does in the happiness of Your Majesty and our daughter. But let it be for me to assure Your Imperial Majesty of the many good qualities

of heart and mind which distinguish the latter. That which might be attributed to the too palpable tenderness of a father cannot be suspected from the pen of her mother by adoption."

Festivities succeeded each other. To the deputations sent by the different States of her father's Empire, with addresses of congratulations, "despite the timidity natural to her age, the Princess replied by a speech which surprised and moved the hearers." To the Hungarians she replied in Latin, their official language. At a private banquet, where the two French ambassadors were given precedence of the Archdukes, Otto reports that the Archduchess asked many questions after the manner of an artless school-girl, and which showed the seriousness of her tastes. "'The Napoleon Museum is near enough to the Tuilleries for me to go and study its antiquities and the fine specimens that are there? . . . Does the Emperor like music? May I have a master for the harp? It is an instrument I like very much. . . . The Emperor is so kind to me, doubtless he will allow me to have a botanical garden. Nothing would give me greater pleasure. . . . They tell me that at Fontainebleau there are spots which are very picturesque and wild. I do not know anything more interesting than beautiful country. I owe many obligations to the Emperor in that he allows me to take Madame Lazansky with me and has appointed Madame de Montebello. They are two very estimable ladies. . . . I hope the Emperor will be very indulgent to me. I do not know how to dance quadrilles, but if he allows me I will have a dancing-master. . . . Do you think Humboldt's 'Journey' will soon be finished? I have read with so much interest what has already appeared of it.'"

"I told Her Imperial Highness that the Emperor wished to know her tastes and even her usual habits.

She replied that anything suited her, that her tastes were very simple, and that she could adapt herself to any mode of life, and that she would conform entirely to that of His Majesty, wishing only to please him. . . . I must mention that, during the hour which my conversation with Her Imperial Highness lasted, she did not once speak to me of the fashions, or of the theatres of Paris."

In the evening was held that most popular of fêtes, a *redoute*, or masked ball, to which six thousand people of all ranks were invited. In a dazzling temple of light the genius of Victory mounted on an altar crowned the coats of arms of the betrothed pair with laurel. At numerous buffets draped with French flags crowds of citizens drank to their healths in Tokay. "The Arch-duchess, who had never been to a *redoute* in her life, passed through the halls on her father's arm. The air was rent with cheers, and the crowds pressed round them with a joy and eagerness difficult to depict."

Next day Berthier made his official proposal for the hand of Marie Louise, and presented the marriage contract. It was noticed that it was drawn up in French. Now Latin was the Austrian official language, but Franz could not afford to stand on his dignity, and merely remarked that this was not to create a precedent. The same evening arrived Count Anatole de Montesquiou from France presenting a miniature of the Emperor set in diamonds, which Marie Louise then and there hung on her breast.

Vienna was a blaze of bunting and decorations. Dinners and gala nights at the theatre succeeded each other, and poets burst into song. A pathetic touch was the crowding to the gates of the Burg of such French wounded officers and privates who were well enough to leave their beds, in order to gaze upon their future Empress. When Marie Louise heard of this she went

to see them, speaking to them so kindly that the *braves* went wild with delight : “Vive la Princesse !” “Vive la maison d’Autriche !” And the good folk of Vienna were but overjoyed to hear the daughter of their sovereign cheered by their conquerors at Essling and Wagram !

The day before the wedding at a state ceremonial in the Privy Council-chamber, Marie Louise swore upon the Gospels her renunciation of her rights to the succession to the throne of Austria. In the evening was a gala opera, Glück’s *Iphigenia in Tauris* at the Hof theatre—the grand staircase an avenue of orange-trees blazing with lights.

Marie Louise was married by proxy in the old church of the Augustines, which forms part of the vast pile of the Hofburg. Thither, starting from the state apartments on the southern side of the Franzensplatz, the long procession of court and state officials, of Archdukes preceding the Kaiser, escorted by body-guards and archers, passed between a double rank of soldiers, and closed with the Kaiserinn leading by the hand the bride, her train borne alternately, during the long route, by *grandes maîtresses* of the Court and pages. Cymbals and trumpets heralded the arrival of the cortège at the church, where the Prince-Archbishop and his bishops and clergy met it and sprinkled the principals with holy water. The Imperial family passed into the choir, the Archbishop took his place at the altar. Marie Louise knelt before it, by her side her uncle, the Archduke Charles, representing his quondam opponent. In accordance with the Vienna rite the marriage service was said in German. After the exchanging of the rings, Marie Louise took back that intended for Napoleon, as she was to give it to him herself. Then, before a vast congregation of kneeling faithful, a Te Deum was sung,

while pages waved flaring torches, and the booming of cannon and the clanging of bells announced to the city that the marriage was accomplished.

Afterwards, in the Hall of Mirrors, followed a brilliant reception by the Kaiser and the Kaiserinn of a distinguished crowd so vast that it overflowed all over the palace and even jostled the Imperial hosts. "But all eyes," writes a French ambassador, "were fixed on the central object of this fête, on this adored Princess who will soon complete the happiness of our sovereign. Her modesty, the dignity of her presence, the ease with which she replied to the speeches made to her, delighted every one. . . . She replied to my address that she would do all in her power to please His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon, and to contribute to the happiness of the French nation, which was from this moment her own. Her Majesty then received all the lords of the Court and spoke to them with a kindness which charmed them."

The Kaiser's voice and smile added to the pleasing words with which he addressed the ambassador: "I give your master my beloved daughter. She deserves to be happy. Cannot you see the joy expressed on all the faces?—our nations need repose, they approve the line we have taken."

At the state banquet which followed, and on which Marie Louise's little brothers and sisters looked down from a gallery, there was a great innovation. The Prince of Neufchâtel sat at the Imperial table from the beginning to the end of dinner. In consequence of the extreme punctiliose ness of the Austrian Court, foreign ambassadors rarely are seated in the presence of the Kaiser, or, at most, they only remain till dessert, when they rise and join the crowd of nobles admitted as spectators. At the wedding banquet of Marie Antoinette the French ambassador did not dine.

In the evening the Kaiser, the Kaiserinn, and the bride drove round the city. Every theatre gave free performances. Unfortunately, it was a showery spring evening, which somewhat marred the illuminations, the ingenious adulatory fiery devices, and the transparencies with which the city blazed. A golden Napoleon had been given by Marie Louise to each of the French wounded, and five to those who had lost a limb, and the act evoked immense enthusiasm and she was vociferously cheered. There were, indeed, a few satirical or offensive posters placarded, but the police made short work of them.

Preceded by the Prince of Neufchâtel, who was to receive her on the frontier of Bavaria, which, as now belonging to the Confederation of the Rhine under French protection, was considered French soil, Marie Louise quitted her home two days after the marriage.

"Her Majesty, the Empress of the French, left this morning with a very large suite," chronicles her ambassador. "On quitting her beloved family and a country which she will never see again, the Princess felt for the first time the agony of such a cruel separation. From eight in the morning all the Court had collected in the audience-chambers. About nine the Kaiserinn appeared leading her august step-daughter by the right hand. She attempted to speak to me, but her sobs stifled her. The young Empress was accompanied by her step-mother and the Archdukes to the door of her carriage, where they embraced her for the last time. Then the strength of this affectionate mother gave way. Almost fainting, she was carried by two chamberlains to her apartments. The young Empress burst into tears, and her grief infected the spectators."

No doubt the ordeal of this tremendous *volte-face* had been for the past few weeks exceedingly trying to the

clever lady, member of the *Tugendbund*, who had worked so hard against him on whom she now fawned as her stepson-in-law !

To the sound of bells and of cannon, escorted by cavalry, and preceded by Count Edling and her household, and by Prince Trautmannsdorf, deputed by the Kaiser as the most noble of Austrian aristocrats to hand her over at the frontier, Marie Louise drove slowly towards the city gate. Seated in a carriage drawn by eight horses, her old friend and confidante Countess Lazansky by her side, she was followed by carriages with her ladies-in-waiting. "The people had tied tricolour ribbons to their houses and even to the castle gates. For the first time the regimental bands played French marches ! "

"The delirious delight which has reigned in Vienna during the last weeks, and which Her Majesty has enjoyed as much as any one, has momentarily given way to feelings which do honour to her kind heart and which must render her still more dear to us. She has a deep affection for her parents, which is mutual. Here she has been given the name of 'Louise the Pious,' and people say it is meet that she should share the throne of St. Louis. . . . Every one has noticed that, in these last days, the solicitude of a father is more apparent in his (the Kaiser's) actions than the caution of a sovereign. The kindly character of this ruler has come out on this occasion in the most favourable manner, and augurs well for the best results of the alliance which has just been concluded."

Received in every village with the same enthusiasm as in Vienna, Marie Louise pursued her journey. At her first resting-place, St. Pölten, a delightful surprise awaited her. The "best of fathers" had driven thither incognito to kiss her for the last time, and with him, quite unexpectedly, came her step-mother. The Kaiser's

last words to his daughter were : “ Be a good wife, a good mother, and make yourself pleasant in every way to your husband—Austrian politics always understood—as long as he is powerful and lucky and useful to our family.” At Ried, where she slept again, Louise the Pious heard Mass in the morning, and by noon had reached Altheim, close to the frontier, where she stopped to remove her travelling-dress and array herself in state.

Braunau, the frontier town, is an insignificant little place ; but for ten days past it had hardly known itself. Feverish preparations had been going on, houses knocked into one, temporary accommodation erected, for here was waiting the French mission to escort the new Empress to her lord, and here was spread out the wonderful trousseau he had prepared in Paris, and the magnificent presents. This trousseau was probably the most sumptuous that ever bride possessed ; even a cursory inventory of it would prove wearisome. Five million francs had been spent to array and adorn Marie Louise’s body, the dresses were counted by the dozen, the under-garments of every description by the fifties, and the footgear by the hundred. The wedding dress cost £480, the court dresses hundreds of pounds. There were ball dresses trimmed with the Napoleonic violets, and with raspberries, light evening dresses of tulle ; one in blonde lace costing £100. The hunting costumes were in white satin and gold, in velvet and gold. There were blonde veils galore. One night-cap cost £35, a lace court train £600. There were three hundred handkerchiefs of cambric and lace, but only sixteen dozen pairs of gloves at thirty shillings a dozen. Jewelled fans, one set with diamonds, gold tooth-picks in a gold case, were included. A diamond and emerald *parure*, with comb, cost £8,000. “ But what struck us most,” writes Bausset, comptroller of Napoleon’s household,

and who was one of the French mission, "among so many beautiful things, was the smallness of her feet, to judge by the shoes we brought, and which were made from patterns sent from Vienna." Napoleon had seen these models, and, tapping his valet on the cheek with one, had exclaimed : "Look, Constant, here's a good omen ! Have you seen many feet like that ?"

In a house opposite the Burghaus, be-flagged and decorated with a triumphal arch in front, the Empress lodged. On a strip of neutral territory between the frontiers had been set up a wooden erection, consisting of three communicating saloons: one Austrian, one French, and the central one neutral, all heated with stoves, for the spring is cold in mid-Germany. Avenues of fine trees had been planted leading up from the high-road, and a large enclosure arranged for the carriages of the two processions.

The same ceremonial was observed at the handing over of Marie Louise as at that of her ill-fated great-aunt, on the same spot. Every item in the programme had been supervised by Napoleon, with his wonderful eye for detail. Received at the entrance of the town by Davoust's division—just evacuating Austrian territory—and which stood to arms as her carriage approached, Marie Louise got out and entered the Austrian saloon. Here was a dais with an arm-chair in cloth of gold, facing the opening into the middle saloon. In front of the chair stood a splendid table, on which were to be signed the official documents.

In the French saloon waited the French household, headed by the Queen of Naples. Not so beautiful as Pauline Borghese, Caroline Murat, the cleverest of Napoleon's sisters, was the most attractive. So, at least, whispered scandal, had Metternich found her during his embassy at Paris. Deputed by her brother to buy

Marie Louise's stupendous trousseau, she had contrived to have herself sent to chaperone his bride. By being thus the first of the family to make her acquaintance, she hoped to secure an influence over the inexperienced young girl. But, considering that Caroline occupied the throne from which Napoleon had ousted Marie Louise's aunt, his choice of an emissary was hardly a happy one !

In appointing his bride's household Napoleon had conciliated all interests and all souvenirs, French and Italian. The Duchesse de Montebello, the *belle veuve* of his old comrade-in-arms, Lannes, killed at Wagram, had been appointed *dame d'honneur*. The Comtesse de Luçay was *dame d'atours*, the Duchesse de Bassano, Comtesses de Montmorency, Mortemart, de Bouillé, Talhouet, Lauriston, Duchâtel, Montalivert, Péron, Lascaris, Noailles, Ventimiglia, Brignole, Gentili, and Canisy, ladies-in-waiting. The Bishop of Metz was made head chaplain, Comte Beauharnais *chevalier d'honneur*, Prince Aldobrandini Borghese first equerry, Comtes d'Aubusson, de Béarn, d'Angosse, de Barrol, chamberlains, Comte Philippe de Ségur quartermaster of the palace, Barons Saluces and Audenarde equerries, Comte Seyssel master of the ceremonies, and Bausset comptroller of the household.

All agog were the French party for the first glimpse of their new mistress. Bausset had even armed himself with a gimlet, "wherewith I made several holes in the door of our saloon. This little indiscretion, which was not mentioned in the official report, gave us the pleasure of contemplating at our ease the features of our new young sovereign, and I need not say that our ladies were the most anxious to make use of the little openings which I had arranged."

This is what the French saw through their peepholes. "Marie Louise entered, preceded by the Austrian master of the ceremonies, mounted her throne, and all the per-

sonages of her household placed themselves to right and left of her, according to their rank. The last line was formed of five officers of the Noble Hungarian Guard, whose uniform is so rich and splendid. . . . The Empress was standing on her dais ; her tall figure was perfect ; her hair was fair and good ; her blue eyes showed all the frankness and innocence of her soul ; her face breathed freshness and sweetness. She wore a dress of gold brocade, brocaded with large flowers in natural colours, and the weight of which must have tried her much. She wore hanging round her neck the miniature of Napoleon, set in sixteen magnificent single diamonds, which had cost altogether five hundred thousand francs."

"Among those awaiting her," writes Madame Durand, one of her *lectrices*, "were many who had known Marie Antoinette. All thought how sad Marie Louise must feel on mounting the throne on which her great-aunt had experienced such misfortunes. The Princess came ; her appearance was not at all sad. She was gracious to every one, and she had the art of pleasing nearly every one."

When all was ready the Austrian master of the ceremonies knocked at the door of the French saloon, and the French procession entered, headed by the Prince of Neufchâtel, who faced the Austrian household. The acts of reception were then signed ; two secretaries of each nationality counted out the dowry—five hundred thousand francs in golden ducats, all new—and handed over the inventory, and the receipt for the Empress's jewels.

Then the Austrians, headed by Neufchâtel, defiled before the throne, "bowing and kissing the hand of the beloved Princess from whom they were parting ; even servants of the most humble order were admitted to lay their homage, their regrets, and their wishes at her feet. Her Majesty's eyes were wet with tears, and this touching show of feeling won all our hearts."



THE ARCHDUCHESS MARIE LOUISE.



Neufchâtel then led the Empress towards the French household, and presented them. Finally, the door of the French saloon opened, and the Queen of Naples herself came to it. The sisters-in-law embraced and talked for a few moments. Then Marie Louise received the Archduke Anton, sent by the Kaiser to compliment the Queen of Naples, and who was to return at once to Vienna to give an account of the "handing over." In an hour all was over. The sisters-in-law entered a carriage, and, followed by the French household, drove into Braunau between lines of troops.

The French mission entertained the Austrian courtiers to dinner, but the two households did not amalgamate successfully. The Comte de Sécur writes that he never saw anything so stiff and haughty as the demeanour of the Austrian ladies, who appeared to grudge the handing over of their Princess, as if she were the last indemnity due to the victors in the war.

When the Empress reached Braunau she was undressed and clothed from head to foot in the new French clothes which had been brought for her. The last tie with her home was severed—"Thou shalt forget also thy people and thy father's house." Then she had to receive the authorities of the little town and the French general. After this she was allowed a little respite, and seized the opportunity to write and tell her father all that had happened to her.

"BRAUNAU, March 16, 1810.

"DEAR FATHER,

"Forgive me for not having written to you yesterday, as I should have done, but I was prevented by the journey, which has been very long and very tiring. I am so glad to take advantage of the opportunity offered by Prince Trautmannsdorf's return to tell you how constantly I think of you. God has given me strength

to bear the cruel shock of this separation from all my dearest. In Him I put my trust, and He will sustain me, and give me courage to accomplish my task. My comfort will be in the thought of the sacrifice made for you. I reached Ried very late yesterday, sad in thinking that I am perhaps separated from you for ever. At two o'clock to-day I reached the French camp at Braunau. I remained a few instants in the Austrian hut, and there I heard the documents read, on the neutral limit, where a throne had been set. All my people came and kissed my hand, and at that moment it was hard to restrain my feelings. A cold shudder ran down me, and I was so upset that it brought tears to the Prince of Neufchâtel's eyes. Prince Trautmannsdorf handed me over to him, and all my household was presented to me. Ah, God ! what a difference between the French and the Austrian ladies ! . . . The Queen of Naples came to meet me, and took me in her arms and showed me a surprising affection ; but still I do not trust it, I do not think that it is only the desire to be of use to me that actuates her on this journey. She came with me to Braunau, and there I had to endure a toilette two hours long. I assure you that I am now quite as perfumed as the other French-women. The Emperor Napoleon has sent me a splendid gold toilet service. He has not written to me yet. As I have been obliged to leave you, I would rather be with him than with all these ladies. Ah, God ! How I regret the good times I had with you ! Only now do I appreciate them. I assure you, dear papa, that I am sad and inconsolable. I hope your cold has gone away. Every day I pray for you. Excuse my scribble, I have so little time. I kiss your hands a thousand times, and I have the honour to be, dear papa, your obedient and humble daughter,

“MARIE LOUISE.”

Next day she started for Munich. "She did not take leave of those who had accompanied her from Vienna without sorrow," writes Madame Durand, "but she parted from them with courage. At the moment when she was getting into the carriage which was to take her to Munich, her comptroller, an old man of sixty-five, who had followed her thus far, raised his clasped hands as if imploring favours from Heaven, and blessing her like a father. His eyes showed him to have a mind full of good thoughts and sad memories, and his tears drew tears from all the witnesses of this moving scene. Of all her Austrian cortège, only Madame Lazansky, her *grande maitresse*, remained with Marie Louise; she had leave to accompany her to Paris. The Empress left with her new household, without being acquainted with any of the persons who formed part of it."

## CHAPTER VI

### *THE MEETING*

MARIE LOUISE halted a day at Munich, received with the highest honours by the King and Queen, the city being illuminated as it had never been before, and a state banquet, a reception, and a gala opera taking place.

The day's rest brought her the first letter from Napoleon ; it also brought her her first grief. The French ladies - in - waiting were jealous of Countess Lazansky, and worked upon the Queen of Naples to get rid of her. They found this friend and confidante who had cared for Marie Louise with such indefatigable zeal since her childhood much in the way. The Duchesse de Montebello complained that she would be unable to guide the young Empress if the latter had ever beside her a foreigner who was all in all to her. But the French ambassador had written home to say that he would offer no opposition, and Napoleon had granted leave for Lazansky to accompany her mistress to Paris. So Marie Louise, grateful, as we have seen in her conversation with Otto, for the Emperor's indulgence, hoped at least to retain her friend's services for a year.

The French ladies, however, anxious to gain the ascendant, pointed out to the Queen of Naples that she would not gain her sister-in-law's affection as long as Lazansky remained with her. Now Marie Louise, as we

have seen in her letter to her father, instinctively distrusted the shrewd, designing woman who had appropriated her aunt's kingdom, and Lazansky backed up her young mistress's feelings.

"Madame Murat," writes Madame Durand, "was ambitious of gaining a great influence over Marie Louise, and if she had acted more cleverly she might have succeeded. M. de Tallyrand said of her that she had the head of a Cromwell on the body of a pretty woman. Born with a strong character, a good head, broad views, and a supple and pliant mind, with charm and sweetness, fascinating beyond expression, all that was lacking to her was the art of hiding her love of power, and when she did not reach her goal it was because she wished to attain it too rapidly. From the first moment when she saw the Austrian Princess she imagined that she had fathomed her character, and she made quite a mistake. Taking her timidity for weakness, her shyness for awkwardness, she thought she had but to assert her will, and thus she closed for always the heart of her whom she desired to dominate."

In the end, however, it was represented to the Empress that a foreign lady-in-waiting with a French sovereign was an anomaly. No order from the Emperor was indeed shown her, but Marie Louise thought that the best way to ingratiate herself with him was to yield. "She wished sincerely," says Madame Durand, "to win the affection of those with whom she would have to live, and, for peace' sake, she did not resist," following, now as ever, the line of the least resistance. But the parting from Countess Lazansky was a great wrench.

"How painful this separation is to me!" the poor girl wrote to her father. "I could not indeed make a greater sacrifice for my husband, and yet I do not think that this sacrifice was in his thoughts."

The worst part of the behaviour of the Queen in this matter was that she issued orders that Countess Lazansky was not to be admitted to say good-bye to her young mistress. But the other ladies had not the heart to carry out this cruel decree. The late *grande maîtresse* was smuggled in by the back door to spend a last two hours with the girl she had so faithfully watched over.

A further touch of spite on the part of the Queen was the sending back to Vienna with the Countess Lazansky of Marie Louise's favourite little dog. The reason given was that Josephine's pet, Fortuné, had been a perpetual source of irritation to Napoleon, who did not like dogs.

"The entire change of toilette," writes the Comte de Ségur, "was but an amusement; the change of her attendants had been foreseen, and was inevitable. This painful transition might have passed without too much apparent grief, had not the jealous attentions of Napoleon's sister been extended even to a small Viennese dog; the inexorable dismissal cost Marie Louise many tears."

Among both the aristocracy and the populace of Vienna the return of the Countess Lazansky created much hurt and angry feeling, and English and Russian spies fanned the flame. The Kaiser himself questioned the French ambassador as to what had taken place, and as to why the Countess had not been allowed to proceed as had been arranged. Then, in his usual easy-going way, he let be what had to be, and by his order the report was spread that it had originally been settled that the lady-in-waiting was only to remain in attendance till her young mistress should have grown accustomed to her new household. On the disturbers of the public peace, who had bruited about the *cafés* that the French army was again in movement, and that Napoleon had but hoodwinked Austria, Metternich laid a heavy hand, sitting up till three in the morning receiving police reports

and arresting ringleaders. Evidently the enthusiasm for the French marriage was but skin-deep.

Meanwhile the bride continued her triumphal progress. Each South German capital received her in state, with the usual entertainments and the inevitable illuminations. At Rastadt the Crown Prince of Bavaria, married to Stéphanie Beauharnais, Josephine's niece, gave her luncheon.

Since the 20th Napoleon had been waiting her at Compiègne. Daily he wrote to her, and received replies by return courier. He had planned her journey, and knew each day what place she had reached. One day he let fall the envelope of her letter, a page picked it up, and the courtiers in the ante-room pressed eagerly to scrutinize the handwriting of their new Empress.

Just as eager and impatient was Napoleon himself. He looked really in love. "Every day," writes his valet, "he sent her a letter in his own hand, and she answered it regularly. The Empress's first letters were very short, and probably rather cold, for the Emperor did not say anything about them. But those following gradually grew longer and warmer, and the Emperor read them with transports of delight. . . . He thought the couriers did not ride fast enough, though they foundered their horses. One day he came back from shooting with ten pheasants in his hand, which he had brought down himself, and was followed by a footman carrying the rarest flowers from the hot-houses of St. Cloud. He wrote a note, and sent for his first page, and said to him: 'In ten minutes be ready to start in a carriage. You will find in it this which I am sending, and you will present it yourself to the Empress, with this letter. Above all, do not spare the horses; go at a page's pace, and fear nothing!' The young man asked nothing better than to obey His Majesty. Armed with this authority which

laid the reins on his horses' necks, he spared not the *pourboires* for the postillions, and in twenty-four hours he was at Strasburg."

Ménéval, Napoleon's private secretary, also testifies to his master's amorous impatience. "He wrote to her every day with his own hand. When she first set foot on French soil he sent with his letter the most beautiful flowers, and sometimes the trophies of his chase. He was delighted with the answers he received, which were sometimes rather long. These answers were in good French, and the feelings in them were expressed with delicacy and moderation; perhaps the Queen of Naples had a finger in them. That Princess sent the Emperor letters full of details which interested him extremely."

On the part of Marie Louise "it was noticed," says Madame Durand, "that she read the Emperor's notes with increasing interest. She awaited them impatiently, and if anything delayed the courier's arrival she asked several times if he were not yet come, and what possible hindrance could have stopped him. One must, indeed, believe that this correspondence was very charming, for it gave rise to a feeling which was soon to become very strong. On his part Napoleon burnt with desire to see his young bride; his vanity was more flattered over this marriage than over the conquest of an empire. And what pleased him more still was that she had consented to it voluntarily."

On March 23, ten days after leaving Vienna, Marie Louise crossed the gaily-beflagged bridge of boats over the Rhine, and really touched French soil at last, to the booming of cannon and the clashing of bells. "It was in Strasburg," says General de Ségur, "that France in its turn welcomed Marie Louise. The enthusiasm on the German military frontier was all the more real and universal and keen because the people saw in the Arch-

duchess the most dazzling trophy of the glory of our arms, and that they imagined that, after eighteen years of war, she was a hostage of peace, this time to be really lasting."

From Strasburg Marie Louise wrote to her father, excusing herself for a long silence caused by the indescribable fatigues of a journey on which she had to rise at five in the morning, be on the road all day, and spend the evenings in receptions or at the theatre. She added that they had just submitted to her the programme of the fêtes at Strasburg, and asked for her orders. "I cannot tell you, dear papa, how amusing it seems to me, who have never had any will of my own, now to have to give orders."

At Strasburg Metternich made his appearance. He was *en route* to Paris, via several German Courts, in order to enjoy the fruits of all his trouble and anxiety by sharing in the marriage fêtes at Paris, in the society of the Queen of Naples. Her evil genius had not long let Marie Louise out of his sight. Another evil genius of the future was, strange to say, hovering near. For, in a Strasburg newspaper of that date we read : "Among the personages present at the fêtes we may mention the Austrian General, Count Neipperg, who was here on a mission of his Government."

At Strasburg Marie Louise received the first letter her father had written to her since her departure. She answered it at once : "I implore you, dear papa, pray earnestly for me. Rest assured that I shall put forth all my strength to fill the post which you have chosen for me. I am sure I shall be happy. I wish you could read the letters which the Emperor Napoleon writes to me. He is full of attentions to me." The intoxication of all the splendid ovations of which she was the object was fast reconciling the artless schoolgirl, the docile daughter, to her fate.

Leaving Strasburg on March 25, and dining at Bar-le-duc, Marie Louise was gladdened at Vitry le François by meeting familiar faces in the shape of Prince Schwarzenberg, now Austrian ambassador at Paris, and the Countess Metternich. She passed on by Châlons and Rheims, and was to have slept the last night of her journey at Soissons.

Napoleon, surrounded by his Court and his family at Compiègne, was fretting and fuming over this tedious journey, impatient to set eyes on his bride. The meeting had been arranged to take place between Soissons and Compiègne. In the centre of three richly decorated tents they were to greet each other; Marie Louise was to kneel, the Emperor to raise and embrace her. The Court and the Imperial family were to be present, cavalry of the Imperial Guard to form the escort, and in a great state coach the pair were to pursue their journey together.

But Napoleon to the winds threw all the elaborate ceremonial he had planned. In the morning Prince Schwarzenberg and Countess Metternich reached Compiègne with the news that they had actually seen Marie Louise the day before. At noon a letter came from her herself saying that she was hurrying on her journey, and would be at Soissons at nightfall. It found Napoleon walking up and down in the grounds in great impatience. So near and yet so far!

Sending for Murat, and wrapping himself in his grey cloak, Napoleon left unobserved by a side-gate. Alone with his brother-in-law, he got into a small carriage with no coat of arms on it, driven by a servant in plain clothes, and tore along the road to Soissons. At the village of Courcelles he found the Empress's carriage just coming in to change horses. Sheltering himself from the pouring rain in the porch of the church just outside the village, when the carriage stopped he rushed towards it.

Without giving the equerry on duty time to let down

the flight of folding-steps by which access was gained to the cumbersome travelling carriages of the day, Napoleon leapt in. Imagine the stupefaction of Marie Louise at this sudden onslaught, when the petrified equerry gasped : “L’Empereur !!!”

Napoleon flung himself on Marie Louise’s neck, and then seated himself beside her. Murat stepped in and sat down by his wife.

Marie Louise was the first to recover her self-possession. Gazing at Napoleon with childish naïveté, she said in a gentle, timid voice :

“Sire, your portrait has not flattered you !”

And at what did Napoleon gaze ?

“A beautiful Tyrolese girl, fair hair, face coloured with the whiteness of its snows and the roses of its valleys, figure slim and willowy, the weighed-down languidness of the German women who seem to need to lean upon a man’s heart, her gaze full of dreams and inward horizons veiled with the slight mist of her eyes. . . . Her bosom full of sighs and fecundity, her arms long, white, admirably sculptured, and which fell with a languid grace as if weary of the burden of her destiny, the neck hanging naturally over the shoulder . . . a statue of Melancholy of the North, exiled in the tumult of a French camp—a simple, touching nature, shut up in herself without, full of actions within.”

Thus Lamartine, the poet. Further, the more matter-of-fact private secretary Ménéval, who saw her that evening :

“In the bloom of youth, her figure was perfect ; her colour was heightened by the exhilaration of the journey and by her bashfulness ; her fair chestnut hair, fine and abundant, framed a fresh, full face, over which eyes full of sweetness shed a charming expression ; her lips, a little full, recalled the type of the reigning house of Austria,

just as the slightly convex nose distinguishes the Bourbon family ; her whole person breathed frankness and innocence, and an *embonpoint* which she lost after her accouchement testified to her good health."

Napoleon was enthralled. Marie Louise was even better than he had dreamed. At a flying gallop couriers are despatched to Compiègne to announce that the Imperial cortège will arrive there that very night. Soissons, so gaily decorated, and where dinner is waiting, is passed through without a halt. The reception-tents are ignored. Down comes the rain in sheets, but it does not damp Napoleon's ardour.

At Compiègne all is bustle and preparation. Hurriedly the decorations are set, the illuminations lit up. Despite the weather, in the darkness of the night the populace streams out to the stone bridge on the outskirts, where Louis XVI. had received Marie Antoinette. At ten o'clock the roar of guns announces the approach of the procession, which rattles up the torch-lit avenue. Becoming drenched in their full-dress uniforms, the officials of the household wait at the entrance to the château. It is so dark that they cannot see the Empress, "or I think," writes the Duc de Rovigo, "we should have thrown ourselves under her carriage wheels to do so."

The Empress passes in. Every eye is fixed on her, "the perfect embodiment of German girlish beauty and fashion—in short, as dainty and sweet as a maiden should be." A group of young girls, all in white, fling flowers at her feet ; at the foot of the grand staircase stand the family of her husband ; presented in due form by the Emperor, they fall in behind her. In the gallery a crowd of the civil authorities of the town—more officials—then the welcome sight of a familiar face, Prince Schwarzenberg. Late though it is, Napoleon cannot

delay exhibiting his bride to his favourite sister, Pauline Borghese, ill and in her room. Then, at last, a private supper, only the Queen of Naples present.

In the eye of the French law, Marie Louise was not Napoleon's wife till the civil marriage had been performed. Apartments had, therefore, been prepared for the Emperor in the *chancellerie*, adjoining the château.

"But had they come and told me that the Tuileries were on fire," writes the Duc de Rovigo, in waiting on Napoleon that night, "I should not have gone to seek him there!"

"Never," wrote Lord Liverpool to Lord Holland, "was a young woman courted in so strange a fashion, and never was woman obtained in such a way—Napoleon's conduct more a rape than a wooing."

## CHAPTER VII

### *"THE AMAZING MARRIAGE"*

REGARDLESS of expense the château of Compiègne had been sumptuously redecorated and furnished for its new mistress. The long gallery had been adorned with golden friezes and stucco columns, the gardens replanted and beautified with statuary, water had been brought from the Oise to make cascades. A brilliant Court was now assembled, for Napoleon was anxious to entirely eclipse that of Vienna. The day after his arrival there was a great presentation of the household officials, of officers of the army, of ministers, who all swore fealty to the new Empress.

A little whiff of home delighted Marie Louise. For besides Schwarzenberg and the Metternichs, her uncle, the Grand-duke of Würzburg, came on a visit, and she had a long chat with him about her family.

All day long Napoleon was in the highest spirits. He, who never dressed for dinner, actually arrayed himself in an elaborate court costume, designed, on the advice of his sister Pauline, by the tailor of the King of Naples, who loved fine clothes. But the coat and the white tie did not suit Napoleon as well as his uniform and a black cravat, and he soon put them on again.

For Vienna at once started the Comte de Preslin, bearing for the Kaiser a letter from Napoleon thanking

him for the beautiful present he had given him. "May your paternal heart rejoice in your daughter's happiness."

Marie Louise wrote to her father alluding to the delicacy with which Napoleon had spared her a formal first interview. "Since that moment I am almost on intimate terms with him; he is deeply in love with me, and I return his affection. I am sure I shall live happily with him. My health continues good. I have quite got over the fatigues of my journey. I assure you, my dear father, that the Emperor is as careful as you are about my health. As I have a little cold, he does not let me rise before two o'clock. All that is wanting to my happiness is your dear presence, and my husband would also like to see you. He wishes it as sincerely as I do."

A few days later: "I can tell you, my dear father, that your prophecy is being realized. I am as happy as possible. The more kindness and trust I show to my husband, the more he loads me with attentions of all kinds. The whole family show much affection for me, and I think the harm people have said about them is not true. My mother-in-law is a very kind and estimable Princess, who has received me very well. The Queens of Naples, Holland, Westphalia, and the King of Holland, are very kind. I have also made the acquaintance of the Viceroy and Vicereine of Italy. The Vicereine is very pretty."

After a few days' rest at Compiègne the Imperial pair, with their Court and their households in separate carriages, left for St. Cloud. Passing round Paris by St. Denis and the Bois de Boulogne, at the boundary of the department they were presented with an address by the Prefect of the Seine. It was still daylight when they reached the palace. Here was waiting the Crown Prince of Baden, and a throng of dignitaries—marshals,

senators, and Councillors of State in full dress. After a private dinner there was a presentation and a swearing-in of the ladies of the Italian household. For Marie Louise was Queen of Italy as well as Empress of the French.

On Sunday, April 1, in the Apollo Gallery of St Cloud, where six years before he had accepted the title of the Emperor from the Senate, was celebrated the civil marriage of Napoleon with an Emperor's daughter. From the apartments of the Empress, through the state rooms, and the *Salon d'Hercule*, came a long and stately procession of Imperial and Royal personages. Everything was done silently and in order. The Emperor and Empress seated themselves in two arm-chairs, on a dais; the Court grouped themselves around them. At a table below stood the Arch-chancellor Cambacérès, beside him the secretary to the Imperial family, Comte Regnault de St. Jean d'Angely. In contrast to the brilliant surroundings, the ceremony was brief in the extreme.

The Arch-chancellor asked the Emperor : "Sire, does Your Majesty intend to take, as legitimate wife, Madame the Archduchess Marie Louise of Austria, here present ?"

Napoleon replied : "Yes, Monsieur."

Then the Arch-chancellor addressed the Empress : "Madame, do you, of your own free choice, take for legitimate husband His Majesty, the Emperor Napoleon, here present ?"

She replied, "Yes, monsieur."

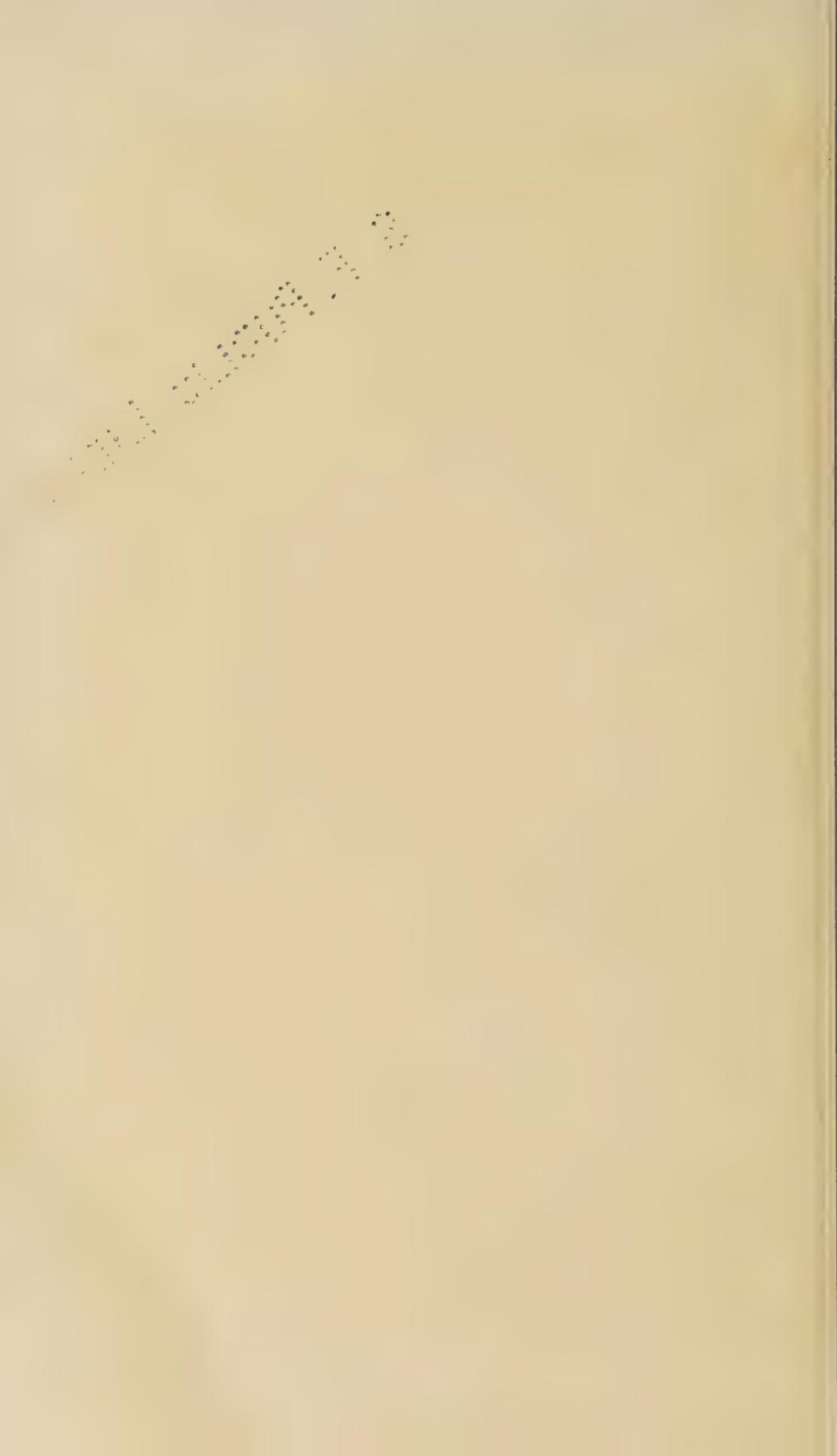
The Arch-chancellor then declared :

"In the name of the Empire and the law, I declare that His Imperial Majesty and King, Napoleon, Emperor of the French, and Her Imperial Highness and Queen the Archduchess Marie Louise, are united in marriage."

The register was then signed by the pair, the Imperia-



MARRIAGE OF NAPOLEON I. AND MARIE LOUISE  
AT THE TUILERIES.



family, and the Grand-duke of Würzburg, while the guns at St. Cloud, answered by those at the Invalides, proclaimed that the deed was done.

After another family dinner-party, followed a performance of *Iphigenia in Aulide* at the court theatre. It had been a favourite opera of the bride's ill-fated great-aunt; but no one seemed to pay any heed to those repeated echoes of past misfortunes and these evil auguries; for vast crowds streamed out from Paris to see the illuminations of the gardens and the cascades of St. Cloud. A violent gale had blown the night before, in the city it was pouring, but at St. Cloud that evening all was quiet and dazzling.

Words almost failed the *Moniteur* to describe, even in French—a language singularly adapted to the high falutin—the splendour of the Imperial entry next day into Paris, and the gorgeousness of the religious marriage. Napoleon was by now a past-master in the art of pageantry. This time he surpassed himself. Never has there been a grander wedding than that of Marie Louise.

It began early. Before nine o'clock in the morning the bridal pair left St. Cloud, seated together in the great state coronation coach, drawn by eight cream horses, and followed by twenty gilt coaches filled with the Imperial family and the Court. The cavalry of the Guards formed the escort, the Marshals of France and great officials rode alongside the coach, and the entire route was hedged by spectators, occupying every point of vantage. Passing through the Bois de Boulogne, and in at the Porte Maillot, the procession reached the spot in the Champs Elysées where Napoleon was rearing his Arc de Triomphe. Here, for twenty days, five thousand workmen had been busy erecting upon the stone foundations a reproduction in canvas of the huge archway with its

allegorical figures and its inscriptions as we now know it. As the coach rumbles out from beneath it, suddenly the spring sunshine bursts forth and lights up the great gilt dome, supported by four eagles, through the glass sides of which the Emperor, in white and red velvet robes,<sup>1</sup> and Marie Louise, glittering with the crown diamonds, are distinctly visible.

All the way down the Champs Elysées are playing military bands ; cannon boom at the Arc de Triomphe, the Invalides, and the Tuileries gardens. Suddenly a halt. It is the Prefect presenting addresses. Marie Louise replies to him that she loves the city of Paris because she knows how devoted it is to the Emperor. Young girls in white hand her baskets of spring flowers ; the procession moves on.

It moves across the fatal square. It is but sixteen years ago, and does Marie Louise, in her gala coach, forget her great-aunt in her tumbril ? Under another triumphal arch the carriage rolls into the court-yard of the gaily decorated Tuileries. In the state apartments her ladies remove the Empress's court train and place upon her shoulders the Imperial mantle sewn with bees. Four Queens carry it—Their Majesties of Naples, Westphalia, Spain, and Holland. Poor Hortense is forced to dance attendance at this supreme moment upon the supplanter of her loved mother. By the Pavillon de Flore Marie Louise passes to the Gallerie de Diane, where the bridal procession is formed. Down the entire length of the great gallery of the Louvre Museum it marches between rows of gaily-dressed spectators, the *haute bourgeoisie* of Paris, to the number of some eight thousand, who have whiled away the weary hours of waiting in consuming refreshments and enjoying the orchestra's performance of special music composed by Paër, the Empress's concert director.

The Salle Carrée, at the corner, preceding the Galerie d'Apollo, has been transformed into a chapel, resplendent with the masterpieces of sacred art. Here are in readiness Cardinal Fesch and the Paris ecclesiastical dignitaries. But, when Napoleon enters, and glances round the clergy, his brow grows black.

"Where are the cardinals?" he asks angrily of his private chaplain, the Abbé de Pradt.

"A great number are here," timidly replies the chaplain. "But some are old and infirm."

"No, they are not here!" exclaims Napoleon in a rage. "The fools! the fools!"

And, indeed, the thirteen Italian cardinals, who, in consequence of Napoleon having been placed under the ban of the Pope, had announced that they would take no part in the marriage ceremony, had not put in an appearance. For an excommunicated person can only receive any of the sacraments from a priest. Other clergy cannot be present. The cardinals' action had nothing to do with the divorce.

For the rest of the ceremony Napoleon looked annoyed. At a supreme moment his might had been flaunted, his pride wounded. Yet nothing was lacking of ecclesiastical pomp in the splendid scene. Cardinal Fesch sang the Nuptial Mass, the Archbishop handed the bridal pair the Gospel to kiss, and censed them. A superbly chanted Te Deum concluded the ceremony, after which the procession returned as it had come. Marie Louise's state robes were removed and handed to the Grand Chamberlain, who carried them in state to the Treasury of Notre Dame, to be laid with those worn by Napoleon at his coronation.

Then the Emperor and Empress showed themselves on the balcony of the Salle des Maréchaux, and the Imperial Guard, marching past, cheered them frantically.

It was immediately after this—in the interval before the state banquet, the public concert in the gardens, and the illuminations reaching from the Tuileries to the Champs Elysées, more magnificent than had ever yet been seen in a period which raised devices in oil lamps and transparencies to a fine art—before this dazzling ending to a dazzling day, that Napoleon sprung upon his bride a touching little surprise, which shows him as a man with a kind heart as well as a resplendent sovereign. Let it be told in the words of that most partial chronicler, the Duchesse d'Abrantès. When Marie Louise was leaving her home for France, "she wept every day at the mere thought of parting from her family. One knows that in Austria the ties of relationship are something sacred, which seems to us French people hardly right. But it is a fact that even under Marie Theresa and the dry and astute rule of Kaunitz these family bonds were held dear and respected. Marie Louise, brought up in these principles, wept not only at the thought of leaving her sister and her father, and, perhaps even, her step-mother, but also at the idea of going to a man who must have been an object of terror to her. Also for that I cannot blame her, and if she had never shed but such tears I would shed some over her to-day. But she replaced them by sweet looks, by words of love, by tender smiles. . . . What I shall never forgive her is not only to have forgotten, but also to have repudiated. That is what my soul will always consider an act of treachery towards one who loved her with love! . . . But enough of those thoughts ; they make my heart burn.

"The day of departure drew near. The Empress took leave of her father, of her step-mother, of her sisters and brothers, then she returned to her apartments, there to await Berthier, who, according to etiquette, was

to fetch her thence and lead her to the carriage. When he entered the study, where she had retired, he found her bathed in tears, and in a voice broken with sobs she told him that she was sorry to appear so weak before him. 'But judge if I am not excusable,' she said. 'See, I am surrounded by a thousand objects which are dear to me. These drawings are my sisters', this wool-work was worked by my mother, my uncle Charles painted these pictures,' and she went on with the inventory of her boudoir, not a mat but had been given her by some loving hand—and then the birds in the aviary—a parrot. But the most important object, the most regretted, making on his part as much noise in his grief—that object was a dog.

"It has been made known to the Court of Vienna how those wretched dogs of Josephine, beginning with Fortuné, which had the honour to take part in the Italian campaigns, and which had its rib broken by an ill-mannered dog, had annoyed the Emperor. Therefore Francis II., like a prudent father, took care that his daughter left her dog at Vienna, and did not take any of her animals with her. But the separation was not the less cruel, and the young Empress and her dog made a duet of lamentation.

"There was, however, in their lamentations the sign of a kindness of heart, which was understood by Berthier, who is himself kind.

"Seeing all this grief where he wished only to see transport and delight, an idea struck him which he acted upon at once.

"'On the contrary, I came to warn Your Majesty,' he said to Marie Louise, 'that she will not leave for two hours, and I crave permission to retire till the moment of departure.'

"And withdrawing at once, he went to the Emperor,

to whom he confided his plan. Francis II. is the best of men and of fathers, and he understood exactly what was required of him. Berthier gave his orders, and, as he had said, in two hours all was ready. He came to fetch the Empress. They started. She reached France. There she saw fêtes and wonders and half forgot her parrot and her dog. Then they reached Compiègne. . . . You know how the carriage stopped, how a man sprang into it without a word, and took his place beside her who was still only his *fiancée*, and to whom he had vowed a fidelity which *was never violated by him* till the moment of his death . . . that death which came as a charity to him, and for which long years of agony had made him cry aloud. Then came the honeymoon of the young bride. All the happiness which surrounded her was so radiant that her eyelids sank before its splendour. They came to St. Cloud—then to Paris. It was then that one of the last smiles of Fortune fell on the head of her favourite surrounded by an aureole of glory, when the latter, taking the hand of this young woman, whom he thought a hostage of peace and eternal alliance, presented her to the people crowding beneath the Imperial balcony of the Tuileries. How that day of joy, the cries of ‘Vive l’Empereur !’ shook the very foundations of the old Louvre ! ‘Vive l’Empereur !’ ‘Vive l’Impératrice !’ cried a hundred thousand voices, and he, all trembling with happiness, intoxicated with a joy hitherto unknown which came flooding his heart, pressed between his own one little hand, which then knew how to answer him, and answered him with love.

“When they had withdrawn from the balcony he said to her : ‘Come, Louise, I must repay you for the happiness which you have just given me !’

“And, dragging her quickly into one of those dark

corridors which even in broad daylight are lighted only by a lamp, he made her walk very fast.

"'Where are we going to?' asked the Empress.

"'Come along! You are not afraid with me, are you?' and he drew near to him the young wife, clasping her to his heart, which beat with a delicious emotion. Suddenly he stopped at a closed door—a noise was heard—it was a dog which had heard, or rather smelt, those who were approaching; it was scratching on the other side of the door. The Emperor opened gently a well-lighted room, where the brightness of the daylight at first prevented her from distinguishing what she saw—then the objects became more distinct—they detached themselves into flames of fire to strike her heart. She leant upon the breast of Napoleon and burst into tears.

"Do you know what caused this emotion? It was that Marie Louise, Empress of the greatest of Empires, found once more in the midst of the triumphal pomps of the glory, shared with a husband who was the greatest man in the universe, Marie Louise found once more, through him, those joys of childhood, those family delights, those souvenirs, which assured her that he to whom her father had confided her happiness would render a good and faithful account. . . . At that time she could still *feel*, and she showed it in the quick emotion which she manifested. The Emperor clasped her to his heart, and softly kissed her cheeks, so blooming, all bathed in tears. What happiness those two then enjoyed! In that moment of ecstasy the news of a victory would perhaps have found Napoleon deaf to the tidings. But the Empress ran delightedly round the boudoir furnished with her own arm-chairs, her rugs, the sketches by her sisters, her birdcages, and even her dog! The poor little creature seemed afraid to come near her.

"'Are you happy, Louise?' asked the Emperor.

For all reply she threw herself again in his arms. They were near the window, and, although it was shut, one could see the tumult outside, and hear the cheers which shook the walls sent up to the sky by the people. . . . Marie Louise drew away, blushing, to the back of the boudoir. . . . Napoleon began to laugh, and made her kiss him in the corner where she had taken refuge. At that moment a slight noise was heard through the half-open door, and Berthier's head appeared. The Emperor took his hand and drew him in.

“‘Here, Louise,’ he said to the Empress. ‘I have had the reward, but he has earned it. It was his idea, on seeing your tears, to have all this taken here to soften what, by the bye, were very natural regrets. There, kiss him too, that he may be rewarded.’

“Berthier had tears in his eyes. He took the hand of Marie Louise, but the Emperor pushed him gently towards her: ‘No, no, not like that! Kiss her, my old friend!’

“And that is the man whom the one abandoned, and the other forgot, ere hardly he had shipwrecked in exile.”

But what of the thirteen defaulting cardinals—the black cardinals, they were dubbed?

When, two days later, the Emperor received the Chamber, the Senate, the great bodies of the State, they made their appearance among the crowd, and not without misgiving. But they were turned out incontinently before the arrival of the Emperor. He abused them angrily to their more pliant colleagues, confiscated their property private and official, and, exiling them from Paris, relegated them to different towns in France under police surveillance.

This episode must, for *Louise la Pieuse*, have cast a cloud over her wedding-day.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE WEDDING TOUR*

“ I AM as happy as it is possible to be. What my father told me has come true. I find the Emperor exceedingly kind. We suit each other perfectly,” writes Marie Louise to her father, at the beginning of the three weeks’ comparatively quiet honeymoon at Compiègne—quiet she sorely needed after the excitement and fatigue of the last month.

To Victoire de Poutet, congratulating her on her engagement to the Comte de Crenneville, she writes :

“ I am very sincerely grateful to you for the wishes you send in your letter of March 26 on the occasion of my marriage. Heaven has fulfilled them. May you soon enjoy a happiness similar to that I am experiencing, and which you so much deserve! you can rest assured that no one wishes it more than your devoted friend, Marie Louise.”

At Compiègne people were delighted to see Napoleon *aux petits soins* for his bride. Every day he invited people to dine whom he wished her to know ; she was very shy, and it was pleasant to notice how kind he was to her. Daily he took *déjeuner* with her at a fixed hour, “ he who never ate unless he was hungry,” and dined with her always. Napoleon was now forty-one, and though already inclined to be too stout, was better-looking than in his youth. He hardly ever left Marie Louise, neglecting

affairs, giving fewer private audiences, arriving two hours late sometimes at Councils of State, because he could not tear himself away from his bride. He had found in her what he never found in Josephine—innocence. The novelty of her frank girlishness charmed him. What a change from the mature, sensual seductiveness of the Creole!

No doubt, that, on her side, Marie Louise was very happy. The ovations and adulations of which she was the object would have turned an older and stronger head. How changed her life from that of her girlhood, but a month or two ago! And Napoleon, too, how different from what she had imagined!

“I assure you, dear papa,” she writes, “that the Emperor has been very much maligned; the more one gets to know him, the more one appreciates and likes him.”

She did not love Napoleon; no one ever loved him. But she had fallen under the compelling influence of his marvellous magnetic personality. With no one before or after did Napoleon take such pains to ingratiate himself, and Marie Louise was soon a victim to his fascination. But she never quite lost her awe of him.

A kindly letter from her step-mother to Napoleon throws a light on Marie Louise’s character. It was a reply early in April to a letter from him “which filled me with joy by the assurance it gives me that Your Majesty is satisfied with the object which we have entrusted to him. My maternal heart felt it all the more as I was anxious as to such a satisfactory result. But to-day, reassured by Your Majesty, I have no further fear, and can give myself joyfully to the happiness of sharing that of my beloved daughter. The latter has sent me such a touchingly sincere account, and I cannot repeat too often how sensible she is to the tender atten-

tions with which she has been loaded from the first moment she saw you. Her one desire is to please Your Majesty, and I flatter myself that she will succeed, for I understand her character thoroughly, and it is an excellent one. Louise has promised me to write very regularly, which pleasant intercourse repays me for a loss which I regret acutely. It is so nice to be able to converse with a being one loves, and I can truly say that I feel for her the tenderness of a mother, which she has won by her conduct towards me, treating me as a real friend.

“ Will Your Majesty listen to me, and thus draw out the best result from the candour of her soul ! If I can take credit for anything it is to have carefully preserved this candour, which, though at first it will seem timid in the eyes of the world, will gain her the respect and friendship of Your Majesty.

“ I may perhaps be blamed in that my daughter has but few ideas and but little knowledge. I agree, but as to the world and its dangers, they are known only too soon, and I will frankly avow that, as she is but eighteen, I preferred jealously to guard her innocence, and I was concerned but to cultivate in her a heart and feeling, an upright mind, and clear ideas about what she knew. It is to Your Majesty that I have handed her over. As the mother, I beg you to be the friend, the guide of my daughter as well as the most affectionate husband ; she will be happy if Your Majesty allows her to turn to you with confidence upon every occasion ; for, I repeat, she is young, and too defenceless to meet the dangers of the world without a guide, or to play her part adequately.”

Marie Louise conquered her new family. Catherine, the wife of King Jérôme of Westphalia, the only real royalty of the circle, said that “ it was impossible to see her without loving her.”

“ My mother-in-law,” wrote Marie Louise, “ is a

most estimable and kind Princess, who welcomed me most kindly." But at first the august new daughter-in-law had no attractions for the somewhat dour Madame Mère. "A weak, insignificant character," she remarked, and Marie Louise found out her mother-in-law's want of confidence in her. Later, they became great friends. One day, at a family gathering, Napoleon held out his hand for his mother to kiss. The old lady pushed it away, exclaiming : "Am I not your mother, and you the first and foremost of my sons ?" "Maman," said Marie Louise, "when I was at Vienna I always kissed the Emperor of Austria's hand." "The Emperor of Austria is your father, my child ; the Emperor of the French is my son ; that's the difference."

The first tears that Marie Louise shed since her arrival from Austria were on Napoleon's first visit to Josephine. She wept, and tried every device to prevent his going. He noticed that she was jealous, and when he subsequently took her to call at Malmaison, as he did occasionally, he took great care only to walk with Josephine in full view of the terrace where Marie Louise sat. The latter's very natural feeling towards her predecessor did not last long ; after the birth of the child Marie Louise no longer looked upon Josephine as a rival.

Napoleon had taken infinite pains over the appointments to the young Empress's personal suite. He would tolerate none of the laxity of Josephine's court near Marie Louise. The beautiful Duchesse de Montebello, "une vierge de Raphael," had been picked out as *dame d'honneur* on account of her late husband, Marshal Lannes, Napoleon's old friend and most brilliant companion-in-arms, who fell at Essling. Lannes had married, in his own *bourgeois* class, a Mademoiselle Guéhémene. Something of a swashbuckler, Bonapartist to the core, hating the *émigrés* and the old *noblesse*, he, nevertheless,

did not disdain to accept the title of Duc as a reward of his services, but even openly gave out that he expected that of Prince. In the first few years of her married life the Duchesse de Montebello was but little seen at Court, as her husband insisted on her following him everywhere ; but her sweet, beautiful face, her gentle manners, made her popular in spite of some coldness and stiffness. When she entered Maria Louise's service she was about thirty, with several little children, and one of the most beautiful women at Court. She bore the highest character, "a real lady of honour," said Napoleon, when he offered the appointment. But she had not the tone of good society, the tact, or the *savoir-faire*, to enable her to live so near the throne. Domestic, devoted to her children and her home, naturally indolent, and with no wish to do anything outside her ordinary routine, she was also a little blunt and short in her manner, and too proud to be deceitful, she was too outspoken and frank in what she said. Not popular among the other ladies, she was not pleasant in her manner to them. They were probably jealous of the ascendancy which she rapidly acquired over their mistress. For the Duchesse de Montebello's good qualities were just those to attract the shy, untutored girl, whose heart was sore at the loss of her childhood's mentor, the Countess Lazansky. Marie Louise soon trusted her implicitly. Besides a man on whom she could lean—and in Napoleon she had replaced her father—she also always needed all her life a woman friend and confidante. To Colloredo and her daughter, and Lazansky, now succeeded Montebello. The latter certainly repaid her confidence by the greatest devotion at the time of her confinement. Later on, as we shall see, at a crucial period of Marie Louise's life, the Duchesse's influence was used to the Empress's undoing. In justification of her conduct then, it must

be said that the Duchesse never really liked Napoleon, and always regarded him as responsible for her husband's death.

The Comte de Beauharnais, a relation of Josephine's first husband, who had been her *chevalier d'honneur*, was appointed to that post with the new Empress. Napoleon had wished to give it the Comte de Narbonne, a man of fifty, of the old regime, who had served Marie Antoinette. But the Empress did not care for the old *noblesse*. Great names had no charm for her; she was accustomed to them from her birth. Perhaps, also, she half suspected their bearers of looking down upon her as having made a *mésalliance*. Therefore, either from pride, or superstition, or perhaps merely from kindness, Beauharnais was appointed, for "the Empress, generally so gently submissive to her husband, this time showed a will in opposition to his," and even gained her point with tears. Moreover, and which counted for much, the Duchesse de Montebello did not care for the witty old courtier, having Beauharnais more under her thumb.

Between the *dame d'honneur* and the *dame d'atours* there was no love lost. Gentle, well-mannered, irreproachable in character, and thoroughly *au fait* at Court, where she had spent many years, the Comtesse de Luçay was the wife of a *fermier-général* of the old regime. One of the first to attach himself to Napoleon, he was made *préfet du palais* and his wife *dame du palais* to Josephine. Napoleon was so satisfied with her that he appointed her to Marie Louise's household.

Besides the ladies-in-waiting, whose duties were official and connected with state occasions, and the *dame d'atours*, the Empress was given six *dames d'annonce*, at first so designated because it was their duty to announce people to whom she gave audience. These were the widows and daughters of generals, chosen especially from

among the superintendents of the institution for officers' daughters which the Emperor had founded at Ecouen. Below the *dames d'annonce* were six *femmes de chambre*, who only came when they were rung for. But the *dames d'annonce*, or *premières dames*, or *lectrices* as they were finally called, spent the whole day with the Empress. They sat with her while she took her music, drawing, or embroidery lessons ; they wrote letters to her dictation or order ; they read aloud to her. They wore red silk aprons, and Napoleon dubbed them *les femmes rouges*, in contradistinction to the *femmes de chambres*, *les femmes noires*, who wore black.

The *femmes rouges* on duty, two at a time, came to the Empress before she rose and did not leave her till she was in bed. Then all the doors leading to her room were locked, except that into the room next door where the *dame d'annonce* in waiting slept. Even the Emperor could not reach his wife's apartment without passing through this one. Except the *dame d'honneur*, and the *dame d'atours*, the Empress received nobody without making an appointment for the audience. Especially did Napoleon wish her to be shielded from court intrigue and the designs of toadies.

Twelve ladies'-maids were appointed. Six had charge of the Empress's jewels and diamonds, six others, selected from among the ladies'-maids of the ladies-in-waiting or from workwomen, dressed her, brushed her hair, fitted on her dresses for the dressmakers, and had charge of her wardrobe. Napoleon removed Josephine's *coiffeur* from her without informing her, and appointed him to Marie Louise ! To her new suite Marie Louise was as charming and considerate as she always was to those of all ranks in her service. She evoked, as ever, loyalty and affection. "The kindness," says Madame Durand, the *dame d'annonce*, "shown by their sovereign smoothed

all disagreeables, and they served her more from affection than from duty."

In his anxiety to shield her innocence Napoleon enclosed Marie Louise in what was practically a harem. With the exception of her doctor, her private and her financial secretary, no man was admitted to her private apartments without an order from the Emperor himself! How particular he was "that no man should boast of having ever been two seconds alone with the Empress," two anecdotes from Madame Durand illustrate.

"The jeweller Biennais had made for the Empress a deed-box fastened by several locks the secret of which was to be known by her alone, and it was necessary that he should show her the mechanism. Marie Louise mentioned the matter to her husband, who allowed her to receive Biennais, and the latter was ordered to St. Cloud. When he arrived he was shown into the music-room; he was at one end of it with Her Majesty, and a *première dame*, Madame D., was in the same apartment, but sufficiently far away not to hear the instructions the jeweller was giving her. Just as they were finished the Emperor came in, and, seeing Biennais, inquired who the man was. The Empress hastened to give his name and to explain why he had come and that leave had been given by the Emperor himself for him to be admitted to her presence. But the Emperor denied that this last was the case, made out that the *dame d'annonce* was in the wrong, and administered to her a severe talking to which the Empress had all the trouble in the world to stop, though she said to him: 'But, *mon ami*, it was I who ordered Biennais to come!' The Emperor laughed, and said that that was not her affair, but that the lady alone was responsible for those she let in, that she had done wrong, and that he hoped that it would not happen again."

This is the second incident. "Marie Louise had a music-master, who had been her mother's, M. Paër. One day, as he was giving his lesson, the *dame d'annonce*, the same Madame D., had an order to give. She opened a door, and half of her body passed through it ; she gave the order, and at that moment Napoleon came in, and, not immediately perceiving her, thought that she was not there. The music-master departed, and then Napoleon demanded where the lady was when he entered. She told him that she had not left the room ; he would not believe it, and made her a long sermon, adding emphatically : 'Madame, I honour and respect the Empress, but the sovereign of a great Empire should be placed above the attempt even of a suspicion.'"

Verily an old poacher makes a good gamekeeper !

Napoleon also complained to Metternich one day that Madame de Montebello, walking in the grounds of St. Cloud with her mistress, had presented to the latter some young men, her cousins. He thought that this was monstrous, that it might lead to intrigues, to people begging favours of the Empress, and he begged Metternich, as he had known her all her life, to point this out to her, lest she should think him a jealous and exacting husband, but that "she was young and inexperienced, and unused to French people and to this country."

Napoleon was by nature too restless to enjoy even his honeymoon long. On April 27 the Emperor and Empress left for a progress through the northern provinces and Holland, which had recently come under his immediate jurisdiction, owing to the abdication of his brother Louis. The journey was a triumphal march ; family royalties swelled the train—sparkling sister Caroline ; "petit polisson" brother Jérôme ; his devoted Queen, good Catherine, whose father Napoleon had made a king ; step-son Eugène, the Italian Viceroy.

Then there were the Austrians—the Duke of Würzburg, Metternich, Schwarzenberg, dragged at the victor's triumphal car to be impressed with his powers as an administrator and a ruler, to be shown that Napoleon was as great an authority on naval matters as he was on military. Between Mons and Brussels the *maire* of a small town erected a triumphal arch of turf across the high road, bearing this inscription : “En épousant Marie Louise,” “Napoléon n'a pas fait une sottise”—which amused her so much that she would not allow Napoleon a moment's rest till he had bestowed the order of the Legion of Honour on its author.

Everywhere the union was acclaimed with wild enthusiasm. At one little hamlet, where the good *curé* and the *maire* offered her flowers, hung a shield with this simple inscription : “Pater noster,” and on the reverse side : “Ave Maria! gratiæ plena.” Could adulation go further?

The first night was spent at St. Quentin, where the great canal joining the Scheldt and the Seine was just finished. The Imperial party and their suites passed through a tunnel, still dry, and brilliantly illuminated for them. Then on to Brussels, and by boat down the canal to Malines. On to Antwerp by water in man-o'-war's boats to inspect the naval squadron there, which was Napoleon's creation, then the entry into Antwerp amid the smoke of the saluting guns, like a naval battle.

At Antwerp a week was spent, Napoleon occupied with naval affairs, and Marie Louise, who saw a eighty-gun man-of-war launched, enjoying herself, and “affable, simple, without pretension,” writes Ménéval, in attendance on Napoleon. “The memory of the charms and of a certain seductiveness of Josephine, perhaps somewhat detracted from Marie Louise. One might have attributed her reserve to the pride of her German dynasty; it was nothing of the kind; no one

had more simplicity and less haughtiness. Her natural timidity, and the novelty of the part she was called upon to play, alone gave her the appearance of stiffness. She had so entirely identified herself with her new position, and was so touched by the consideration and the affection which the Emperor showed her, that when he suggested that she should wait for him at Antwerp during the little tour he was about to make in the island of Zeeland, she implored him to take her with him, without fearing for her the fatigues of the journey."

The Empress wrote congratulations to Victoire de Poutet upon her marriage, hoping that she "may enjoy as lasting happiness as myself." Delighted to find that her friend had been married the same month as herself, she hopes that all is working to make the marriages resemble each other, and that "you may become the mother of a fine child the same time as I do, for already I have hopes." The Emperor, "with a graciousness and obligingness which is so natural to him," at once acquiesced in the Empress's wish to sign her friend's marriage contract, and which she is delighted to do as a proof that "I still retain for you the devotion I have vowed to you since my childhood."

At Middleberg, on the island of Walcheren, only evacuated by the English four months previously, "for the first time yesterday I have seen the ocean" (*sic*). Picking up shells on the shore with her sister-in-law, the Queen of Westphalia, they were caught by the tide and wetted from head to foot, and, boarding a battle-ship, the Empress sprained her ankle.

The Imperial party returned up the Scheldt to Antwerp, and then spent three days at the château of Laeken, and attended a gala performance at the Theatre de le Monnaie at Brussels. Upon rising to acknowledge the applause of verses in her honour, Marie Louise

fainted dead away—an incident which gave rise to many comments and hopes. Then they drove rapidly by Ghent, Bruges, and Ostend, to the northern French seaports as far as Havre. Thence Marie Louise wrote a congratulatory letter to Countess Colloredo on her daughter's happiness, which was full of ardent longing that she herself might become a mother: "I have stood the journey well, but it was rather fatiguing." Indeed it had been one long scene of fêtes and receptions and balls, of dazzling illuminations and gay triumphal arches, accompanied by delirious popular enthusiasm. By the 1st of June they were back again at St. Cloud, by way of Rouen.

The Kaiserinn, now at Carlsbad, being adulated by Goethe, wrote to her husband: "I hear from Laeken, from Louise, who is very sad over signs of pregnancy; she writes she is all in love, then dances and speaks of long receptions, grumbles over twenty different things, such as a sprained foot, colic, fever, dulness, oppression on her breast, nerves; then writes eight letters, dances, goes everywhere, and describes all the fashions. She hates England, not so much the French, and so on. I only say that so it is at eighteen. God keep her in good principles."

"When she had returned from the Belgian journey," writes Rovigo, "the Empress had gained a knowledge of the French people, she had been well received everywhere, and had begun to be accustomed to a country where everything she saw gave her the hope of a long and happy stay in it. She had received an excellent training which had imbued her with the idea that a woman should have no will for her own, because she could not know for what she was destined; if it had been a question of going to live in the desert, she would not have made the least objection—a passive temperament, which, later on, did

so much harm. People began to like her, and to congratulate themselves on having a sovereign above intrigues, and who could favour any one without having to dread the gossip of the Court. People who came to Court for the first time, and saw her less, mistook for haughtiness the natural timidity which she retained till the day she left us. These people were wrong, and I think they took too much upon themselves by their way of comparing everything to the old Court of Versailles. One thing, however, contributed to make the Empress shy during the first months of her stay in France, and that was that she spoke French less fluently on arrival than she did afterwards. She understood it well, but in any conversation in which she was obliged to be careful of what she was saying, the construction of our sentences demanded from her some caution, so that she was obliged, as it were, to translate the German sentences, which came to her without any hesitation, into the French language, which did not come so quickly. She never perceived how the slight embarrassment which one noticed in her on such occasions added a charm."

This probably explains how it was that the Duchesse d'Abrantès, away in Spain, heard such criticisms from her court cronies of the deportment of their new Empress, that she "received all the homage with a sort of indifference, and, from what I heard, nothing led me to suppose that she would be later the gracious, welcoming, protecting joy and happiness of her Court."

Cardinal Maury, however, wrote to the Duchesse in a very enthusiastic strain : "It would be a useless endeavour to try and make you understand how the Emperor loves the Empress. It is love, but it is love indeed this time. He is in love, I tell you, and in love as he has never been with Josephine, for, after all, he never knew her young. She was over thirty when they were married, whereas

this one is young and fresh as spring-time. You will see her and be enchanted."

Especially was the Cardinal taken with—

Le teint blanc de Louise,  
Et la taille élancée.

Madame de Boigne, however, thought her only a fine woman, fresh, too high-coloured, very vulgar, no distinction, and quite outshone by Pauline Borghese, who looked younger.

On the other hand, Bausset, *préfet du palais*, was favourably impressed by her kindness, which she carried into social life. "It was easy to perceive that she had a mind naturally high-principled, much information without any ostentation, a dignified and touching simplicity, and a sweet cheerfulness which went well with her features. She loved art, was an excellent musician, sketched well, and rode with gracefulness and dignity, spoke French well, wrote it still better, and knew Italian and English. From this *ensemble* of valuable accomplishments a most happy and attractive personality resulted."

"Her very timidity," says Comte Rambuteau, "added a certain charm to her, there was something so pathetically affecting in her. She inspired her surroundings with a mixture of respect and sympathy, and these feelings, added to a general conviction of her real omnipotence, won all hearts for her. I was at every fête and was often selected to open the state balls, while I was waiting for my special duties to begin, which they did after the journey to the Trianon, where the Emperor took the Empress to rest at the beginning of her pregnancy."

The month of June was crowded with some of the most magnificent festivities the world has ever seen. Napoleon was determined that Marie Louise's Court should not only eclipse that of the old regime in

brilliancy and pleasure, but also be far superior to that of the Hapsburgs—*viel roche*, exclusive and stiff above all those in Europe—in dignity, ceremonial, and the rigid etiquette.

“Never,” says Alfred de Musset, “have there been so many sleepless nights as in the time of this man . . . never so much joy, so much life, so many warlike fanfares in all hearts. Never were more brilliant suns than those which dried up all this blood. People said that God made them for this man, and they called them the suns of Austerlitz.”

It was the time of year when Paris is most beautiful. All that could be devised in light, colour, sound, and motion was pressed into service for the fêtes, which resembled each other so much that description becomes wearisome. The city of Paris set the ball rolling. The fête began in the morning with public amusements for the people; at nightfall superb illuminations, a gigantic ballet of Mars and Flora, on a stage; it wound up with free refreshments. Arriving from St. Cloud in a torch-light procession, the Imperial pair viewed the fireworks and flaming *tableaux* from the Hôtel de Ville. At the ball which followed the Empress danced with the royalties in the first quadrille. They left at midnight, but fifteen hundred guests danced and supped till dawn.

A few days later Princess Borghese gave a ball. To her new sister-in-law she paid a delicate compliment in shape of a performance on an illuminated lawn of a ballet in which the dancers were dressed as Viennese peasants, while the background was the château of Laxenburg on fire. Feltre, the Minister of War, gave a ball. But the grandest fête of all was that given on the Champs de Mars by the Imperial Guard. Marie Louise said she had never seen anything so lovely. It had been preparing for months. The École Militaire

was a mass of flowers. When the Emperor and Empress entered at seven o'clock three thousand ladies, each with a bouquet in her hand, rose up ; the whole place became one vast nosegay. The wives of Napoleon's most distinguished marshals formed a body-guard for Marie Louise. In the Champs de Mars 400,000 spectators watched the horse and chariot races ; Madame Blanchard, the aérostat, went up in a balloon ; fireworks followed a ball, and, after the departure of the Imperial guests, 1,500 people sat down to supper at two o'clock in the morning.

But the ball given on the 1st of July at the Austrian Embassy by Napoleon's old antagonist Schwarzenberg, was to surpass everything. As the *hôtel* was not large enough for the 1,500 dancers, a wooden ballroom had been built out in the garden, hung with gold and silver brocade, chandeliers, and candelabras. It was a fairy scene ; "there were flowers enough to pay for a palace." On arrival Napoleon and Marie Louise made a tour of the apartments, found a musical or theatrical surprise in every saloon, a concert and a ballet in the garden, with Laxenburg on fire again as a background. The first quadrille only began at midnight. The Emperor came down from the dais where the Royalties were sitting and passed round chatting to people. Never had he seemed gayer and happier, offering favours, urging people to dance.

Then, suddenly, a window-curtain caught fire at a sconce. In a few instants the flames spread like wild-fire—there were no firemen in readiness !

Metternich, standing at the foot of the dais, ran up to Marie Louise and begged her to follow him out quietly to avoid a panic. The wretched ambassador flew to Napoleon : "Sire, I know how this hall is built—it is doomed : but there are so many exits that no one runs any risk. Sire, I will cover you with my body !"

Fearing an Austrian plot, the officers of the Imperial Guard formed round Napoleon with drawn swords. The latter took the Empress by the hand and led her out by the garden. Getting into the first carriage they found in the court-yard, they drove as far as the Place Louis XV. Here Napoleon got down, and, while Marie Louise drove back to St. Cloud, he returned to the Embassy to see if he could help at the fire.

Meanwhile the scene there baffles description. In an incredibly short time the ballroom had become one vast furnace, fanned by the night-wind. The sudden panic among the happy dancers, and the crush, were terrific. Beams and chandeliers crashed down amidst the screaming and the shouting ; doors were blocked, and ladies and girls trampled on ; people rushed hither and thither, they knew not why or wherefore, madly searching in the dense smoke for exits. Overhead crackled and roared the flames. The Queen of Westphalia, fainting, was rescued by Metternich. The Queen of Naples, Prince Eugène and his wife—in a delicate state of health—still remained on the dais. Then the Queen attempted to escape by the door through which the Emperor and Empress had fled. But she was enveloped in the crowd and only saved by the Grand-duke of Würzburg and a marshal. Eugène was able to remove his wife by the side-door. The hostess of the evening was carried to her husband unconscious, but safe ; but his brother, mad with terror, sought his wife, who had rushed back into the burning hall to rescue her young daughter, who had formed part of the gay crowd dancing a schottische. She found her, the two managed almost to reach the top of the stairs ; the crowd separated them. The mother, missing the daughter, turned back to find her, and was seen no more alive.

Napoleon, on his return to the burning building,

behaved with the courage and coolness which might have been expected of him. At 4 a.m. he was back at St. Cloud, dusty, torn, scorched, black. He went straight to his wife's rooms to see if she was upset by the danger and the catastrophe. Then he returned to his room, and, throwing his hat on his bed, exclaimed to his valet ; "Mon Dieu ! Quel fête !"

Next day the air was thick with rumours of killed and wounded. The Russian ambassador had fallen senseless in the midst of the flames ; only the thickness of the gold lace with which his uniform was covered saved him. The conduct of the Emperor and Empress was much praised.

"As to the Empress," writes one who was present, "her behaviour was admirable. . . . At the moment when the fire broke out she was also going round the circle of ladies. She sat herself down on the throne and there awaited the Emperor. It was *sang-froid*, perhaps even courage. *Mon Dieu !* if she only had had half as much on March 28, 1814 !"

Next morning she wrote to her father, in German :

"I did not lose my head. The Prince of Schwarzenberg led us, the Emperor and me, out of the *hôtel* by the garden. I am all the more grateful to him as he left his wife and child in the burning ballroom. The panic and confusion was appalling. If the Grand-Duke of Würzburg had not carried out the Queen of Naples she would have been burnt alive. My sister-in-law Catherine, who thought her husband was in the midst of the fire, fell in a faint. The Viceroy carried out the Vicequeen. Not one of my officers or of my ladies were near me. General Lauriston, who adores his wife, was screaming most lamentably and preventing our getting out. Yet I was more calm at that moment than when I saw the Emperor go back again. Caroline

and I sat up till four in the morning. Then we saw him return, all soaked with rain. The Duchesse de Rovigo, my *dame du palais*, is much hurt. So are also the Countesses Buchholz, Löwenstein, the ladies of the Queen of Westphalia. . . . Lauriston, in saving his wife, who is my lady-in-waiting, burnt his hair and his forehead. The Prince Kourakin, very much hurt, fainted. In the panic he was trampled under-foot and was carried off half dead. Prince Metternich was hardly hurt at all. Princess Charles Schwarzenberg, who would not leave till she had seen that every one was gone, has bad burns. Princess Paul Schwarzenberg has not been found. The poor ambassador was beside himself, though he is not responsible for this catastrophe."

The letter was interrupted, and Maria Louise added later :

"I have just been to the Emperor and heard awful news. Princess Paul Schwarzenberg has been found, all charred. . . . The diamonds of her *rivière* were near her, and she wore on her neck a heart in diamonds on which were the names of her two daughters, Eleanore and Pauline. It was by this jewel that she was recognized. She has left eight children, and she was expecting another. Her family is inconsolable. Kourakin is very bad, and so is Madame Durosnel, wife of a general. I am so upset I cannot move."

With this appalling catastrophe ended the wedding festivities of Marie Louise. Was it an evil omen for her future happiness? People remembered the calamity which, forty years before, cast a gloom over those of Marie Antoinette.

## CHAPTER IX

### *THE BIRTH OF THE HEIR*

IT seemed almost as if Napoleon could command Nature. When he announced to the Senate the incorporation of the States of the Church with the Empire, which coincided almost with the signing of his marriage contract, he decreed that his son and heir should bear the title of the King of Rome, and hold his court there. By the time his fête-day—August 15—arrived, in 1810, he was assured of hopes which would set the coping-stone on his happiness.

The Queen of Saxony told Bignon, the historian, that the Archduchesses always began with a daughter. “If the Empress gives birth to a son it will be a miracle which will react upon the fate of the Empire.”

Marie Louise wrote to tell her father of her expectations. “God grant it may be so! The Emperor would be so happy about it! I assure you, dear papa, that I should have no alarm about this event, which would be such a happiness. . . . I seize this opportunity to ask for your blessing for me and for your grandson or granddaughter. My joy will be complete if this birth brings you to Paris. . . . My husband often talks to me about you, and much wishes to see you again.”

The Kaiser was delighted with the news. “Napoleon’s son will be my grandson; he will find in me all the feelings of a father.”

To the Countess Colloredo Marie Louise wrote with equal joy. But, considering the momentous issue at stake, one hardly gathers that she was as careful of her health at this time as might have been considered prudent. She walked and drove a good deal and also learnt a new accomplishment—riding ! The Austrian Archduchesses were never allowed to ride before they married. Napoleon himself gave her lessons in the riding-school at St. Cloud : “ He walked beside her, holding her hand while the groom held her bridle ; he calmed her fears and encouraged her. She profited well by the lessons, grew bolder, and ended by riding well. When she had become a horsewoman who did credit to the master, the lessons were sometimes carried on in the drive in the grounds which lead from the *salon de famille*, so called because it was hung with portraits of all the Imperial family. The Emperor, when he had a moment of leisure after *déjeuner*, sent for the horses, mounted clad in silk stockings and buckled shoes, and pranced beside the Empress, excited his horse, galloped, and laughed out at the fright into which he put her ; all danger, however, was provided against by grooms stationed at intervals to stop his horse and prevent a fall.” In September she was taking part in the *grandes chasses* at St. Cloud three days a week.

All over France interest and expectation grew. On the anniversary of the day on which he had defeated his father-in-law at Austerlitz the Senate came to congratulate Napoleon, and a solemn Te Deum, the usual illuminations, and a play, marked at the Tuileries a day which, for Marie Louise, had hitherto been associated with sad memories. At Notre Dame three young girls were married and dowered by the Empress. The Emperor founded a munificently endowed Maternal Society under her presidency. The Comtesse de Ségur was Vice-president, there was a committee of court ladies. It was

to help the poor and deserving mothers of several children in their confinements, by giving money, soup, wine, clothes, and, if there were already many children, the mother was paid to nurse her child as if she were a wet-nurse. The Society was well managed and did much good.

The New Year came in. There were no lack of amusements, as Marie Louise wrote to the Countess Colloredo on sending her New Year's wishes for her children; "but the moments which I pass most pleasantly are those I spend alone with the Emperor." Bad weather had put a stop to outdoor exercise and riding, and she no longer danced. "You, who know how little courage I have, will understand how I look forward to the event with secret dread."

Napoleon's first *étrennes* to his wife was characterized by a tact and delicacy which would hardly have been expected of him. Always inclined to be extravagant, and to wish for pretty things, she fancied a set of Brazilian diamonds, valued at £1,800 ; but as she wished to send her sisters some presents to the value of about £1,000, she found that she would only have about £600 left out of her income for December. So, without saying anything to Napoleon, she gave up the idea of the set of diamonds, and it was only by accident that he discovered that she had done so. Whereupon he ordered a similar set, but worth five times as much, and when he gave it to her, asked her what presents she intended sending to her sisters. When she told him, Napoleon thought them rather poor. She replied that the Archduchesses were not spoilt, and that such presents would seem to them magnificent. But he gave her £4,000 for them.

Paris was very gay that winter—so much dancing, and the Empress's health excellent. The Court spent Christ-

mas and New Year at the Tuileries, and Marie Louise was still able to appear at the hunts in the woods of Vincennes and St. Germain, and at the battues at Versailles. She drove with Napoleon in the Bois de Boulogne. On New Year's Day she appeared at the reception in a beautiful dress of Lyons velvet that the *maire* of that city and a deputation had that morning presented. Napoleon's tenderness to her was touching. She walked on the terrace of the Tuileries by the river, which had been enclosed by an iron railing, and was reached by stairs from the ground floor. In February she went to a fancy ball at the Duchesse de Rovigo's, and even gave a small dance in her own apartments ; to which, however, only a few foreigners, such as Schwarzenberg and Prince Leopold of Coburg, were invited.

But the celebrated surgeon accoucheur Dubois had taken up his residence at the Tuileries. The Duchesse de Montebello, too, the nearest approach to an intimate friend that the Empress possessed, had left her own house in the Rue d'Enfer and had come to stay at the palace. The *layette*, too, was in readiness ; it had cost £120,000 ; and two little cots, one pink, the other blue, had been prepared.

On March 5, the Prefect of the Seine and the Corps Municipal came to offer the Empress, in the name of the city of Paris, the most magnificent cradle that could be imagined. A superb piece of work, designed by Prudhon, the artist, it is to be seen in the Treasury at Vienna, to which it was given by the Duke of Reichstadt. Silver-gilt, it is ornamented with mother-o'-pearl. Four cornucopias, with figures of Justice and Strength, support the four corners. The rim is of mother-o'-pearl, powdered with gold bees. At the top is a shield surmounted by the Imperial monogram, surrounded by a laurel wreath. A figure representing

Glory standing on a globe holds up a crown, in the middle of which glitters the star of Napoleon. A rich curtain of lace, powdered with stars and edged with gold embroidery, fell to the edge of the cradle. This curtain is now in the possession of the grandchildren of Madame Soufflot, the King of Rome's deputy governess.

Sixteen years after that March morning, when it was presented with so much ceremony, the Comte d'Herrison, visiting Parma, saw this treasure in the *garde-meuble* of the palace. "I fear," he writes sarcastically, "Messieurs Perrier and Fontaine, the designers of the sumptuous gew-gaw, worked a malicious idea into the ornaments which embellished the cradle. Two genii decorated the foot—Force and Justice. The first turns its back on the royal brat, the hope of France; the second, with ill-balanced scales, well represents the justice of sovereigns on one side and the other." He also saw the toilette service presented to the Empress by the city of Paris at the same occasion—a cheval glass, arm-chair, toilet table, *lavabo*, and perfumery cabinet, valued at 500,000 francs.

The tension increased all over Paris and France. Daily the Empress strolled on the terrace on the edge of the pond in the Tuileries gardens. Crowds gathered at the gate to see her pass through, and to pray for her happiness.

At nine o'clock on the evening of March 18 the big bell of Notre Dame, echoed by that of all the churches in Paris, began to call upon the faithful to spend the night in prayer for the happy deliverance of Her Majesty.

The Duchesse de Montebello was with the Empress, tending her like a mother—she spent nine nights on a sofa at the foot of her bed. The Comtesse de Luçay, Mesdames Ballant and Durand, were also in the room, with Dubois, the surgeon, and the nurses. In the



NAPOLEON AND MARIE LOUISE AT COMPIÈGNE.



adjoining drawing-room, in profound silence, sat Napoleon with his mother and sisters ; from time to time he came into his wife's room to cheer and soothe her. But he was unable to remain long, for he, inured to a hundred battle-fields, was unmanned by the sight of his wife's sufferings. At five in the morning Dubois informed the Emperor that the birth would not take place for some time yet, whereupon those in waiting were dismissed, and the Emperor, who had worried himself into a fever, went to take a bath.

"The Empress," writes Madame Durand, who remained in the Empress's room, "worn out with fatigue, slept for an hour. Suddenly violent pains awoke her with a start. These continued to increase, but without bringing about the crisis demanded by nature, and M. Dubois became convinced of the sad fact that the accouchement would be long and difficult. He went to find the Emperor, begging him to persuade the Empress to suffer bravely, and did not conceal from him that he hardly hoped to save both mother and child. 'Think only of the mother,' said Napoleon, 'and give her all your care. Do not lose your heads !'

"Napoleon hardly allowed himself to be dried, and, slipping on a dressing-gown, ran to the Empress's rooms, after giving orders to warn all those who ought to be present. He kissed the Empress tenderly, and exhorted her to be patient and brave."

"'Because I am Empress,' she cried, 'must I be sacrificed ?'

"'Courage, Madame,' said Madame de Montebello, who was holding her head. 'Your precious life is not in danger. I have also been through this ! and I can assure you, you are running no danger; don't be afraid !'

"M. Bordier, the doctor, and M. Yvan, the surgeon, now came and held Marie Louise. The child arrived feet

foremost, and M. Dubois was obliged to use the forceps in order to free its head. The labour lasted twenty-six minutes, and was very hard. The Emperor could not be present more than five minutes; he let go the Empress's hands, which he was holding between his own, and retired to the dressing-room, pale as death, and almost beside himself. Every moment he sent one of the women who were there to bring him news. At last the child was born, and when the Emperor was informed he flew to his wife and clasped her once more in his arms. Cambacérès, the Arch-Chancellor, was brought in to verify the birth and sex of the child. The Prince of Neufchâtel, though he had no reason for coming in, followed him, urged by his zeal and devotion. The child remained seven minutes without giving any sign of life. Napoleon glanced at him a moment, thought him dead, did not say a word on the subject, and only concerned himself about the Empress. A few drops of brandy were blown into the child's mouth, he was gently slapped all over the body with the palm of the hand, and wrapped in warm clothes. At last he gave a cry, and the Emperor came to embrace his son.

"When the Empress was back in bed, and all was quiet about her, he then returned to dress, for he was only in his dressing-gown; but smiling, and humming to himself, a sign of great contentment. The servants did not dare to approach him, but he called them : 'Eh ! bien, Messieurs, j'espère que nous avons un assez gros et un assez beau garçon. Il s'est fait un peu prier pour arriver, par exemple, mais enfin le voilà !'"

Meanwhile all Paris had been hanging in breathless expectation awaiting the salute which was to announce the birth, twenty-one guns for a princess, and a hundred and one for an heir to the throne.

Since dawn the Tuileries gardens had been crowded with people. A rope had been stretched from the gate

of the Pont Royal to the Pavillon de l'Horloge, along the terrace, in front of the palace. But this slight barrier was quite sufficient to keep in check the growing crowd, only anxious not to disturb the Empress and which spoke only in whispers. Then, suddenly, at nine o'clock, the cannon of the Invalides began to speak.

There came upon Paris a hush such as a great city has never known. When the booming began, work, play, even speech paused ; in the street, at the doors and windows, every one was counting the reports—one, two, three——the tension grew painful. Twenty-one ! would there be another ? It came.

“At the twenty-second report wild enthusiasm broke out everywhere, the shouts of joy, the hats in the air, the cheers, which went up from the Tuileries gardens, carried the news into the other parts of Paris, quite as fast as the guns. Napoleon, standing behind a curtain of one of the windows of the Empress's rooms, enjoyed the sight of the genuine intoxication and seemed exceedingly touched ; large tears ran down his cheeks without his being aware of it, and in this state he came again to kiss his son.”

“Never,” writes Constant, his valet, “had glory drawn from him a single tear, but the happiness of being a father softened a soul which the most brilliant victories and the most sincere public ovations hardly seemed to ruffle. And, in truth, if Napoleon might claim the right to believe in his lucky star, it was on that day when the Archduchess of Austria made him who had begun by being the cadet of a Corsican family the father of a son.”

A year afterwards he said to the Duchesse d'Abrantès, who was in Spain at the time of a great event, “You were not at his birth ? It was a fine sight. I saw then how the Parisians loved me ; but it's a hard business for you women.”

And he pressed his hand to his forehead as if to drive away a painful recollection.

" 'I quite understand,' he went on, ' how it was that Junot fled to me when you went to bed. But the Parisians paid the Empress well for what she suffered ; yes, they were well pleased. And the army, how did they receive the news ? '

" I told him that for a fortnight they were as if mad with joy. He walked about with his hands behind his back, his head bent low, but smiling. One saw that he was recalling a happy moment."

In a few hours the event upon which all France and Europe hung had become a subject of private family rejoicing in every home. It was a beautiful spring day. Madame Blanchard, the balloonist, went up an hour after the event from the Champs de Mars, scattering papers announcing the great news. The semaphore telegraph of the period, unhampered by fog, spread the news all over the country. By the afternoon it was known in all the principal cities of the Empire. Couriers and pages flew on horses to carry letters and despatches to crowned heads and diplomats. Even poor Josephine, in Normandy, was not forgotten by Napoleon.

" MA CHÈRE JOSEPHINE,

" I have a son. I am at the summit of my happiness."

" Ah ! yes, he must be happy ;" and she wiped away a tear. " And I am happy, too, in the Emperor's happiness ; happy in seeing the hopes of the French fulfilled. I grasp the fruits of my sorrow, my sacrifice, for it assures the prosperity of France ! " And she gave a ball to celebrate the event. It was the day after her name-day—St. Joseph's.

Count Tettenborn carried the news to Vienna, riding 960 miles in four and a half days. He rode Prince Schwarzenberg's racehorses as far as Strasburg, beyond, those of Prince Joseph Schwarzenberg.

The day after the birth the Emperor on his throne received congratulations of the various departments of the State, who passed on to view the King of Rome asleep in his silver-gilt cradle, on which the Legion of Honour and the Iron Cross had been placed by the Chancellor, and the Order of St. Stephen by Schwarzenberg.

Twelve hours after his birth the King of Rome was solemnly anointed in the chapel of the Tuileries. The Comtesse de Montesquiou had been appointed his *gouvernante*. She was a dignified woman of forty-six, with kind, simple manners and solid principles. Madame Soufflot, widow of a member of the Corps Législatif, deputy *gouvernante*, and her daughter Fanny, were under her. This devoted trio accompanied him into exile.

It was a solemn moment when Napoleon advanced to present his son to the Archbishop; in the chapel dead silence prevailed. Outside in Paris, all illuminated, the crowd shouted and cheered. On the banks of the Seine, thronged by thousands, the boatmen gave an impromptu fête. There was merry-making from Cadiz to Tarento, from Bruges to the Niemen, and especially in Warsaw and Rome. All was spontaneous, nothing was done to order. At Vienna the French ambassador gave a ball; the Kaiser and Kaiserinn, who never before had been seen at a private entertainment, were present.

The King of Rome was born at a time of universal peace. From the far north of Germany the unhappy relations of Schill's partisans, participants in his rebellion, sent pathetic congratulations: "The German mothers whose sons are still in the chains of France, to Napoleon

the great Emperor of France, on the occasion of the birth of his Majesty, the King of Rome."

The great event inspired poets, great and small, in every language of Europe—except English. In a week the Emperor and Empress had been inundated with no less than two thousand effusions, and had scattered, says Madame Durand, no less than £4,000 in largesse to their perpetrators.

The amount expended in presents to relations and officials, in money, jewels, and Sèvres china, amounted to £20,000.

The Duchesse d'Abrantès, returning from Spain, found France in a "delirium of joy. Alas ! it was the last smile of Fortune for Napoleon. But how happy he was with this last favour ! How he enjoyed it ! One must have seen him with his son, have seen him devouring that pink and golden head with caresses, seen him wishing him with his eyes all the happiness which such a man could promise to his race, to form a real idea of what the unfortunate creature must have suffered on his rock at the end, when he no longer had anything except the picture of an angel he was never to see again. . . . I found him changed—*him*, in person. But a quite new expression with which it seemed to me that his face was lit up, was that of *father* . . . an excellent piece by a poet, gives a correct idea of Napoleon looking at, and caressing his son ! "

"Car les cœurs de lions sont les vrais cœurs de pères." (Victor Hugo on the death of the King of Rome in "Napoleon dans les Cent et Un jours.")

Marie Louise made a quick and excellent recovery, and the boy throve exceedingly. Napoleon, in his joy and excitement, fussed a good deal.

One day Madame Mère and his three sisters came to pay a formal visit of congratulation to the young

mother. The Emperor found three arm-chairs placed by Marie Louise's bedside awaiting them. He ordered them to be replaced by three stools (*tabourets*), saying that it was etiquette only for the daughters of sovereigns to sit on arm-chairs. But when the ladies came they were so annoyed that they would not stay.

Another day Marie Louise upset herself by taking medicine without the doctor. Napoleon was annoyed with the *dame d'honneur* for having allowed her to do so, saying that it was etiquette for the doctor himself to administer the dose. When he had left the room the Duchesse remarked: "I am glad M. l'Etiquette has gone, for I never liked long sermons."

Within a month the Empress was driving in the Bois de Boulogne, had received personally the congratulations of the *corps diplomatique*, and was churched by the Cardinal Prince de Rohan in the chapel of the Tuileries. On April 24 she and the Emperor went to stay at St. Cloud, and thence Marie Louise wrote in German a happy letter to her father:

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"You can imagine my enormous happiness. I never could have believed that I could feel such a joy. My love for my husband has grown, if it were possible, since the birth of this son. I am still touched to tears when I think of the tenderness he has shown me. This alone would make me devoted to him if I were not so already on account of all his good qualities. He tells me to write to you about him. He often asks news of you. He said to me: 'How pleased your father must be to have a grandson.' When I told him that you loved the child already he was delighted. I venture to send you the portrait of my son. You will find, no doubt, a likeness to the Emperor. He is very strong,

for five weeks old. When he was born he weighed nine pounds. He is very well, and spends all day in the garden. The Emperor takes a great deal of notice of his son. He carries him about in his arms, wishes to feed him, but does not succeed. You will have learnt, from my uncle's letter, that I suffered for twenty-two hours. You cannot imagine what sufferings! But the joy of being a mother quickly made me forget them. The baptism is fixed for June. I am sorry your affairs do not permit of your being present. Please God you may come soon! I was delighted to hear by Prince Clary that you are well. I hope God will grant my prayers, and that dear mamma will soon be well again. You cannot imagine how many questions I asked about you. For to talk of you and of your kindness is my great pleasure."

To the Countess Colloredo she wrote, on the birth of Madame de Crenneville's boy, which took place about the same time as that of the King of Rome, congratulations "all the more hearty as I am myself tasting all the fulness of that joy of which one must have tasted to form an idea. I have been much touched by the wishes you send on this occasion for my son, and I hope that they may be realized, and that he will be like his father, the joy of all who come near him and know him."

Slowly, she writes, she was recovering from her dangerous confinement, so she cannot complain.

"My son is wonderful for his age; he looks as if he were three months old. He laughs out loud, and is like the Emperor. Since April 20 I have been at St. Cloud, taking long rides; you see I have not followed the law of our grandmothers, who insisted that it was necessary to remain six weeks in the house; but

I went out walking and driving before four were over. It may be imprudent, but I am the better for it."

To Victoire herself she wrote a proud mother's letter, full of little details and comparisons of the babies, which her friend had asked for. "My son is also strong and beautiful." Riding had been ordered, and she had ridden from St. Cloud as far as the Trianon and Rambouillet. "The son grows; you can see him grow. He is charming, and my maternal love flatters itself that he has said 'Papa.'"

The beginning of the fine summer weather took Napoleon and Marie Louise to Rambouillet for a few days' shooting. Here the life of the Imperial pair was always more private and unostentatious than in Paris, or at St. Cloud and Compiègne; they were, so to speak, *en famille*. Marie Louise was able to indulge her taste for reading. In June she read eighteen volumes of Madame de Genlis.

But Marie Louise, who had been so delighted with her previous trip to the Low Countries, wished for further travelling, and persuaded the Emperor to take her on a little tour to Normandy and the sea. They stayed at Caen, flinging £5,000 in charity and presents. At Cherbourg Napoleon opened the great new dockyard he had constructed, and made various military and naval inspections.

"The Emperor," writes his *préfet du palais*, "wished to breakfast on the pier which had been begun in the unhappy reign of the most virtuous of sovereigns. I arrived before their Majesties; it was beautiful weather, and I had everything arranged. The table was placed facing the sea, and it was easy to perceive the English vessels on the horizon, and, indeed, they were far from suspecting the presence of Napoleon. There was, however, a formidable battery on this pier, protecting these

fine roads and the port. I do not think our neighbours would have been tempted to come nearer to salute us, even had they been better informed. . . . On a signal from the Emperor the squadron which was lying in the roads, consisting of three men-of-war, commanded by Vice-Admiral Tronde, advanced majestically with sails full spread, and sailed slowly round the pier on which we were. The admiral's ship approached as near the pier as possible, and the Vice-Admiral came with his barge to fetch Their Majesties and their suites ; he conducted us on board amid the cheers of the crew drawn up in full dress.

"While the Empress and the ladies who accompanied her remained to rest in the council-room (*sic*) Napoleon went down to inspect the inside of the vessel ; at the moment when we were least expecting it he ordered a general and simultaneous discharge of all the guns. In my life I never heard such a row ; I thought the vessel would have blown up ! "

The little tour did Marie Louise a great deal of good, and she came back to St. Cloud on June 4, looking very pretty, though she had lost her plumpness after her confinement and never regained it, and was paler than she had been before ; "but still," says the Duchesse d' Abrantès, "quite red enough."

On Sunday, June 11, the King of Rome was baptized with immense pomp at Notre Dame. The public festivities began in the morning by the marriages of poor girls, dowered by the city, to soldiers. All day there were free refreshments, and fountains running wine, in which enormous crowds drank to the health of the little King. In the evening followed free performances at the theatre, and the inevitable illuminations.

At seven in the evening the Imperial procession passed through the gaily decorated streets between a

double rank of the Imperial Guard, to the shouts of "Vive le Roi de Rome!" At the cathedral the Senate, the great departments of the State, all the dignitaries of Paris, and deputations from every great town in the Empire had awaited it for three mortal hours. Notre Dame, splendidly decorated and filled with a galaxy of rank and fashion, was lighted like day. In the sanctuary were gathered twenty cardinals, and no less than one hundred bishops and clergy. The ceremonial arranged by Napoleon was most elaborate. Carried by the Duchesse de Montesquiou, his train borne by the Marshal Duc de Valmy, the baby was half-smothered in a mantle of silver lined with ermine. Beneath a canopy upheld by four canons of the cathedral walked the Emperor and Empress. The Grand-duke of Würzburg stood godfather for his brother the Kaiser; Madame Mère was one godmother, Queen Hortense stood for the other, the Queen of Naples. The child received the names of Napoleon François Charles Joseph.

After the ceremony, at the gate of the choir, the *gouvernante* placed the baby in his mother's arms. The herald advanced into the middle of the choir and cried three times: "Vive le Roi de Rome!" which brought forth a thunder of applause even in the sacred edifice! Marie Louise stood holding her baby. Then Napoleon took him from her, and held him up to show him to the immense congregation.

The baptism cost Napoleon £14,000, of which £1,600 went to the ecclesiastics.

The day ended with a great banquet at the Hôtel de Ville, followed, when the Emperor and Empress retired, by a ball which lasted till dawn. The great courtyard had been floored in to the heights of the windows which opened into the rooms. Fountains ran wine. There were collected a brilliant company of citizens, whom the

Emperor liked to meet. He was so excited when he headed the court procession, and walked so fast, that the Empress had almost to run to keep up with him.

"The latter," writes the Duc de Rovigo, "though young, went through this great show without losing her popularity ; she, indeed, needed much patience, for, as she made the tour of this immense gathering, she had to repeat a thousand times, in a different manner, the little court phrases which serve for every one ! She managed to add a few last words, which charmed those who might have been inclined to allow themselves to be repelled by a cold manner, which came from the shyness of her age and her great bashfulness."

Every great town in the empire kept the baptism with fêtes. None were grander than those at Rome itself, where a Te Deum was sung at St. Peter's, and the dome and colonnades illuminated.

But the description of Napoleonic fêtes really grows monotonous and wearisome. The Emperor in the present day would have excelled as a stage-manager or pageant-master. One he gave in honour of his son at St. Cloud must have been really most beautiful, and it was calculated that, during a whole day and half a night, some three hundred thousand people enjoyed it. In the daytime the usual free feasting, fountains running wine, free games and entertainments ; in the grounds the Imperial Guard dined the whole garrison of Paris. At six o'clock the Imperial pair drove about through the grounds in the summer evening in a small carriage unescorted.

When night fell the palace, the terraces, the amphitheatre, the fountains, the cascades, and the park burst into light. Six illuminated frigates executed naval manœuvres on the river. Madame Blanchard soared again in her balloon, firing a galaxy of pyrotechnics from

her glittering car. From all along the Seine, and all over Paris the bouquets of fireworks were visible. On a stage of grass was performed a musical intermezzo, and, as the Empress passed along by a column crowned with a bouquet, a dove, bearing in its beak a complimentary device, fluttered to her feet.

But what pleased Marie Louise most were dioramas in fire of the castle at Vienna, of Schönbrunn, and of Laxenburg, and the opera ballet troupe, dressed as Austrian peasants, dancing in bosky stages to several orchestras.

The moonless night was admirably suited for such a show, but it was ominously still and heavy. Scarcely had a transparency of the future palace to be built above the Bois de Boulogne for the King of Rome been lit up, than a sudden violent storm of rain burst upon the gaily dressed crowd. The Emperor was chatting with the *maire* of Lyons at the door of a saloon opening into the gardens. "Monsieur le maire," quoth he, "I am doing good to your manufacturers."

And, in truth, every one was instantly wet to the skin. No one had brought any umbrellas, and the damage to the dresses must have been enormous. Happily, her equerry, Prince Aldobrandini, found one with which to protect Marie Louise as he led her into shelter.

The illuminations fizzled out, the strings of the orchestras snapped, and the fête broke up in confusion. Superstitious people recollect ed the Schwarzenberg ball, and noted that the storm burst just as the King of Rome's palace was flashing into flame.

On August 15 the fête-day of the Napoleons, father and son, was brilliantly celebrated at St. Cloud and in Paris. On the 25th Marie Louise kept hers at the Trianons. For two and twenty years deserted and silent, the favourite play-place of her ill-fated aunt burst

into life and gaiety again. All day long, despite a heavy shower, the pretty grounds were crowded, at nightfall they were lit up, and the Empress received some six hundred beautifully dressed and be-jewelled women in the gallery of the Grand Trianon, talking to them with an ease and appositeness which was much commented on.

The Imperial pair then passed to the beautiful little theatre of the Petit Trianon, and saw *Le Jardinier de Schönbrunn* played by the opera ballet. Afterwards, arm-in-arm, the Emperor hat in hand, they walked about the illuminated gardens, finding fresh surprises at each turn—hidden music wafted from the depths of the lake, on the surface of which floated shimmering boats ; *tableaux vivants* in fire ; peasants of every part of the Empire, from the Tiber to the North, dancing ballets in glittering shrubberies. At the end came a great banquet in the gallery of the Grand Trianon. Never, said courtiers of the old regime, had the Trianons in Marie Antoinette's time been so gay ; never, said Marie Louise, had she kept her name-day so brilliantly.

## CHAPTER X

### *HOME LIFE*

IT was not in Napoleon's nature to live merely for pleasure. Empire-making, in every form, was his real amusement. Now, he felt, the lover must give place to the sovereign. After Wagram he had told his generals : "Enough of the trade of a soldier ; the time has come to take up that of a King !"

Therefore, while the present peaceful lull yet lasted—for the political horizon was clouding over, a little cloud no bigger than a man's hand rising in the direction of Russia—he determined on an administrative tour in Holland, which, irked as it was by the continental blockade, it behoved him both to pacify and impress.

In September he set out, alone. The Empress was to join him at Antwerp a week later. But she felt this short separation, for to her father she wrote :

" My husband left this evening to visit the island of Walcheren, the worst climate there is, and I have not been able to go with him, which makes me very sad."

While Napoleon was busy over ports of commerce, coast defences, arsenals, and dockyards, with an eye to his great enemy across the straits, Marie Louise was to queen it at the ancient Belgian capital, now the *chef-lieu* of a French department. At Brussels she went several times to the theatre, was received with great enthusiasm, and spent no less than £600 in lace to give

an impetus to the trade of the city. At the end of September she joined Napoleon at Antwerp and on October 8 they entered Amsterdam in state.

The Dutch were feeling acutely the continental blockade of English goods, and regretted the easier days of King Louis. Napoleon was determined to make himself popular, and Marie Louise was to help him. She entered the capital alone in a gilt glass coach, with a body-guard of young Dutch nobles. The Emperor followed on horseback surrounded by a brilliant staff. During the fortnight's stay at Amsterdam all that pomp and circumstance could devise was done to dazzle the phlegmatic Dutch. The actors of the *Théâtre français* were brought from Paris. The Emperor made excursions over Holland, sparing no pains over grievances and reforms. Marie Louise visited the model Dutch village of Broack, clean and tidy to such a pitch that no one was allowed to drive down its streets, paved with mosaic and sanded over in floral patterns ; no one was allowed to enter a house except in stockinginged feet. Even Marie Louise's uncle, Joseph II., had been compelled take off his boots. "But I am the Emperor," he had protested. "If you were the Burgomaster of Amsterdam," replied the master of the house, "you should not enter in your boots !" But for his great-niece all restrictions were removed. She drove down the sacred streets, and for her were unbarred the equally sacred front doors, opened only on the occasions of baptisms, marriages, and deaths. This speaks for itself of the attitude of the Dutch towards their young Empress. Napoleon had thawed the Dutch.

Yet the stay at Amsterdam was marked, for Marie Louise, by two little incidents which ruffled her peace and happiness. When they arrived at the palace Napoleon spied a bust of the Czar on the Empress's piano. He took it hastily down, tucked it under his arm while he

walked through the apartments, and, finally, ordered one of the ladies to remove it out of his sight. For those who were not blind, a straw showed how the wind was going to blow.

The other incident was more personal. For a moment only Napoleon seemed to admire Princess Aldobrandini, the witty, vivacious young wife of the Empress's equerry. He suggested to his wife and to the Duchesse de Montebello that they had better "imitate her and become quite perfect." Marie Louise, for the first time hurt with her husband, kept silence; Montebello vented her annoyance on the Princess. It was, however, but a passing fancy on Napoleon's part. He was never openly unfaithful to Marie Louise. Outwardly, at least, at Court, decorum reigned, and by his special wish.

After a peep at Saardam, where Peter the Great had worked as a shipwright, and another at Haarlem, the town of tulips, the Emperor and Empress slept at Rotterdam, Le Loo, and the Hague, and then went up the Rhine to Düsseldorf, capital of the Grand Duchy of Berg, which Napoleon had given to his eldest nephew, Louis Bonaparte's young son. Here all was loyalty and obsequiousness. To the reception of officials came a hundred-year-old Rabbi, supported on one side by the Roman Catholic priest and on the other by the Lutheran minister. After dinner Count Beugnot, the Governor, played whist with the Empress for his partner, against the Duchesse de Montebello and the Prince of Neufchâtel. "The game was played very carelessly, as often happens under the circumstances; each of the players only using his eyes for his cards and giving his mind to what was passing round the table, to which the Emperor came up from time to time to say a pleasant word to the Empress, or some joke to the Prince of Neufchâtel and to me. My mind was occupied, both during dinner and during the

game, in finding out what mood the Empress was in, and in gleaning from her expression some hints as to her character. The journey had been a long one, she seemed tired and bored. She only answered the Emperor in monosyllables, and the others by a monotonous nod of her head. I do not know really what it was ; but I am inclined to think that Her Majesty is not exempt from the awe with which her august spouse inspires all those who have the honour of approaching him."

After a two days' stay, the Imperial pair passed on to Cologne, where a Te Deum was sung in the cathedral. Then home to St. Cloud, by Liége, Mézières, and Compiègne. Thus ended the longest progress that the Emperor had yet made in any part of his dominions. Marie Louise wrote that the journey, and the beauty of the Meuse had quite set her up and that she found her son strong, possessing four teeth, and saying "Papa," "but pale and thin from teething."

The boy was growing not only into a fine child, and a very precocious one, but also, to judge by Isabey's portraits, was exceedingly lovely, with his long fair curls and large blue eyes. Under the devoted care of the Comtesse de Montesquiou he was thriving. Napoleon's choice of a *gouvernante* had been an excellent one. Madame de Montesquiou was now forty-six, of good and old family, religious, dignified, simple in her manner, and devoid of haughtiness. Her touching devotion to her charge never faltered or failed, in prosperity or in adversity, and already he was growing almost as fond of her he came to call his "Maman 'Quiou," as of his own mother.

In truth the Empress and the Comtesse were a little jealous of each other over the boy, but neither dared show it, for Napoleon insisted on all being peace and harmony at Court, at least outwardly. Nevertheless, it was

divided into two distinct parties. The first was headed by the Comtesse de Montesquiou, who, with her husband, Napoleon's grand chamberlain, represented the old *noblesse*. This party intrigued for honours and favours for the *émigrés* in order to attach them to Napoleon, whom they imagined irrevocably fixed in France. Because of his gratitude for the Comtesse's devotion to his son, the Emperor rarely refused what they asked. The other party, headed by the Duchesse de Montebello, was small but very active. It was protected by the Emperor and consisted of Napoleon's new nobility. Further, there was a third party, the military, represented by Marshal Duroc, who was comptroller of the palaces, the furniture, etc. Secretly favoured by the Emperor, he used it to counteract the others. The two first parties fought almost openly; the third looked on, criticized, and unmasked them both.

The Comtesse, quiet and prudent, was reserved and cold to the Duchesse, and never confessed that she did not like her. The latter rarely went to see the King of Rome, and tried to prejudice her mistress against his *gouvernante* by saying that the Comtesse's devotion was in self-interest. In consequence, Marie Louise hardly did justice to the Comtesse, who, indeed, was constantly endeavouring to open her eyes to her favourite's intrigues.

The *dames du palais*, ladies-in-waiting, and the Empress's chamberlains did not live in the palace, but only appeared at stated hours to attend her in walking and driving, or on public occasions. But when the Emperor was away, the Duchesse slept in rooms she had in the palace, near her mistress. These communicated by a back passage with those of the Empress, who used to run along it in the mornings in order to go and chat with her favourite, without passing through the salon

where the other ladies sat, which, of course, did not tend to make her more popular with them.

On her return from Holland Marie Louise had settled down into a regular routine of life. Napoleon did all in his power to make it a pleasant one. Except at State functions, he liked but little etiquette, and Marie Louise had been brought up to a very retired family private life in the intervals of the great ceremonial of the stiffest Court in Europe. Winter was spent in the Tuilleries, where Marie Louise had the rooms formerly occupied by Marie Antoinette and by Josephine, on the ground floor between the Pavillon de Flore and the Pavillon del'Horloge, looking into the gardens. The state apartments consisted of an ante-room, drawing-room, second drawing-room, and concert-room. The private apartments were a bedroom, study, dressing-room, and boudoir and bath-room. The salon after the ante-room was hung with violet blue patterned in maroon. Domenichino's "St. Cecilia" found a place there. The second salon was hung with yellow silk fringed with brown and red, and was much admired. Mahogany furniture was upholstered to match in Indian silk. English chandeliers and lustres lighted it, and the room was furnished with mirrors draped with silk, console-tables, Sèvres china, and marble vases.

The bedroom had a double bed, in mahogany with gilt ornaments, and which stood in an alcove. It was curtained with blue, gold, and white. The walls were hung with old masters. From the bathroom a secret stair led up to the Emperor's study. Beyond the bathroom was a small library with dwarf book-cases, all the books bound in green. Raphael's "Madonna della Sedia" hung there.

Marie Louise loved flowers, and to have her rooms full of them. Madame Bernard, the florist, dressed her

rooms at St. Cloud for £120 a year. The Empress also had aviaries full of birds.

Napoleon lived on the floor above, in the same bedroom as Louis XV. and Louis XVI. A little back staircase communicated with the Empress's rooms, and he came and went as he pleased.

The expenses of Marie Louise's household in 1812 were 346,000 francs. On secretaries, etc., she spent 3,300; on wardrobe, jewellery, 800,000; on servants, 476,000; on jewellery as presents, 660,300; on lace, 187,134; on a costume for a fancy quadrille in February, £960.

The summers were spent at St. Cloud, the palace Marie Louise liked best, because of its country air and its beautiful grounds. She slept there on the first floor, in the rooms Marie Antoinette and Josephine had used; her bedroom was subsequently the third Napoleon's council-chamber. Rambouillet and Compiègne were chiefly used as hunting-boxes. Versailles Napoleon never lived in.

Marie Louise's day began at eight a.m., when her maids opened her curtains and shutters and brought her her *petit déjeuner* and the papers. The Comtesse de Montesquiou also brought the boy, and his mother kept him with her till nine o'clock, when she made her toilette and received *petites entrées* people. Then she would often pay a visit to the nursery hung with soft green silk, and padded to the height of a child of seven or eight lest the little King should hurt himself. Taking her wool-work, she would sit by him while he played. Often, followed by the nurse, she would carry him off to the Emperor's study. The nurse waited outside the door and the Empress went in alone, carrying the child, whom she was always afraid of dropping. No matter how busy he might be the Emperor was always delighted to see the

boy, and would rush up to him and cover him with kisses. He would manage to sign despatches and consider business papers while he sat with the child on his knee. Sometimes he even played with him on the floor. Napoleon had a set of little wooden bricks with which he worked out manœuvres, and if these were arranged for some intricate military problem, and the boy upset them, the fond father only smiled. An old marshal, once seeing this little picture of domestic happiness through the half-opened door, was moved to tears.

At noon Marie Louise had *déjeuner*, always alone now, as Napoleon after his son's birth reverted to his old irregular habits of feeding during the day. At two o'clock she drove out with the Duchesse, the *chevalier d'honneur* and two or three ladies. Sometimes she rode instead, alone, or with the Emperor. When she returned she had a music or a drawing-lesson. Both Paër, her music-master (badly paid at £49 a year), and Prudhon, who taught her pastels and water-colours, and Isabey, thought well of her talents. In the intervals she would go and sit in the nursery with her embroidery.

"Directly she returned to her private apartments or to the privacy of her garden," writes Lamartine, "she became German again. She had cultivated poetry, her pencil, and her voice. Education had perfected in her these talents, as if to alleviate the sadness to which the young girl would be a prey when away from her native land. She excelled in these, but for herself alone. She read and recited the poetry of her mother-tongue and of her clime."

Homesick she doubtless was, at times. Ménéval relates that one day he noticed that she gazed pensively at the view from St. Cloud, and told him that she wished she had a magic wand to transform it into that of the environs of Vienna as seen from Schönbrünn.

Napoleon always dined *tête-à-tête* with his wife, at seven or eight o'clock. Occasionally the Duchesse or the Comtesse de Luçay were invited. If Napoleon was absent the Duchesse always dined with her mistress. On Sunday there was always a family dinner-party, after the *bon bourgeois* fashion, of Madame Mère and the Imperial brothers and sisters, which function was always something of an infliction to the hostess. After dinner there was, every evening, a concert, or a small reception. The Empress went to bed at eleven.

Of these small receptions that old republican, Cardinal Maury, writes enthusiastically to the Duchesse d'Abrantès : " And then, if you knew how cheerful the Empress is, gracious—even familiar with all the persons who are admitted to her intimacy ! You will see how kind she is. People talk so much of the *soirées* of the Queen of Holland, I can assure you that the Empress is charming to those whom the Emperor has honoured by granting them the *petites entrées* at the Tuileries. One goes there to pay one's respects, one plays with Their Majesties at reversis and billiards, and then the Empress has so many little charms, so many little kindnesses, that one sees that the Emperor is dying to kiss her. That is what I want you to see : how happy the Emperor is."

The Comte de Melito also describes the Tuileries receptions : " The Empress came in. . . Her face had a noble expression, but a little scornful. Attended by Madame de Montebello she went round the company and spoke with graciousness and condescension to many people she had presented to her, and each one could congratulate himself on the kind welcome he received."

When alone with her ladies, at the small receptions, before the Emperor came in, Marie Louise, writes the Duchesse d'Abrantès, was wont to entertain them by

showing how she could turn her right ear quite round by moving the muscles of her jaw—a unique performance, which evidently bored the Duchesse, who writes, as usual, spitefully, of these evenings. She is even more scornful over Marie Louise's behaviour to her son. "Her affection for him was apathetic," she writes. "One saw her just nod to him when she came in from riding, and her feather made the child cry ; at four o'clock she went to his rooms, took her wool-work, looked occasionally at the little King, and nodded at him : 'Bon jour ! Bon jour !' and then went off to a lesson from Isabey or Paër. He was taken," says the Duchesse, "to her at nine every morning. Sometimes she would look at him, and pat him, and then gave him back to the nurse, and read the papers. The child was not amused, as he was with his father. The faces round him were grave, and in the end he grew naughty and had to be removed."

Napoleon had no fixed hour for seeing the child ; it was impossible to arrange one. But the Comtesse de Montesquiou generally brought him at *déjeuner*, when Napoleon would seat him on his knee, feed him, or try to, smear him, and have jokes with him, till they both laughed. He would play with him as if he was six himself, and romp with him, sometimes too roughly. The boy preferred his father to his mother, who really, despite being the eldest of a large family, was unused to playing with children. Moreover, he was so precious to her—the guarantee, she thought, of peace between France and Austria—that she was half afraid of him.

Napoleon, weary of the coquette in Josephine, loved the *ingénue* in Marie Louise. The latter never painted or dressed up. Ménéval noticed, on her first arrival at St. Cloud, that her dresses were not worn so low as those of French ladies. But Napoleon also liked the Archduchess in her. Without passion for Marie Louise,

he had more deference for her. She suited him very well as an Empress. Never once was he known to be angry with her, never once did a reproach escape him. "The Emperor was satisfied with her," says Thiers, "a good-constituted young woman, kind, simple, well brought up, was all he wanted." Châptal, always prejudiced against Napoleon, records his words : "If France knew all the worth of this woman, she would fall down at her knees !" "Innocence itself," Napoleon called her years after at St. Helena, "adorned with all its attractions."

At first Marie Louise was afraid of her husband. He was too great a man for her. One day he asked her what instructions she had received with regard to him from her father. "To be yours entirely, and to obey you in everything," was the reply. Soon after her marriage she said to Metternich : "I am sure they are very anxious about me, that the general opinion is that I am enduring fearful sufferings. This is a distortion of the truth. I am not afraid of Napoleon, but I am beginning to think that he is half afraid of me !"

And indeed the following repartee shows that the Corsican ogre had no longer any terrors for his wife. For he was talking to her one day about some towns which the Kaiser had seized. "So, you see, your father is a thief," laughed Napoleon. "Quite right," retorted Marie Louise ; "but he only steals some estates, and you steal kingdoms !" Napoleon laughed again, and demanded of those present if a wife, who ought to respect her husband, was right in calling him a thief.

Habitually she addressed him as "Mon ange !" and occasionally lapsed into Germanisms, as : "Napoléon, qu'est ce que veux tu ?" Yet withal, as Ménéval says, "married to Napoleon, she was united to a man too great for there to be any community of ideas and feelings."

She told Lady Burghersh that Napoleon had always been good to her: "Il ne m'a jamais maltraité." She was always, said Lady Burghersh, a little afraid of him, and very anxious not to displease him, but grateful to him for his kindness to her. Her magnificence as Empress did not appeal to her own simple tastes, but she liked having the means to do kindnesses and to satisfy her own generous instincts. Every month, by her orders, her dressmaker, Leroy, sent gowns to Vienna for her step-mother and sister Leopoldine.

At St. Helena Napoleon said of Marie Louise that she was "never at ease with the French, remembering always that they had killed her aunt, Marie Antoinette. She was always truthful and discreet, and courteous to every one, even to those she most detested. She was cleverer than her father, whom alone of all her family she loved; she could not bear her step-mother. She differed from Josephine in that she was delighted when she had ten thousand francs to spend. One could have trusted her with any secret, and she had been enjoined at Vienna to obey me in everything. She was a charming child and a good woman, and had saved my life." "And yet, all said and done, he loved Josephine best. . . . 'She would have followed me to Elba,' he said, with an oblique reproach."

"The more Napoleon knew the Empress," says Ménéval, "the more he congratulated himself on his choice. The character of this Princess seemed to him to have been made for him; she had given him happiness and comfort in the midst of his stormy life. In their intimate relations she was easy and kind without losing dignity. Never a complaint or a reproach escaped her lips. Endowed with a gentle temperament, but reserved and cautious, her feelings were never expressed with much vivacity. She was charitable, liked to give; she

was simple, and showed at the same time a quiet cheerfulness and a mind untainted with bitterness. Though well educated, she did not parade her knowledge : she was afraid of being accused of pedantry. A companion to the Emperor, her attractive qualities earned her husband's affection, just as her invariable sweetness fascinated all who lived in her intimacy. In thus criticizing her I forbid myself all partiality inspired by the past, as well as all concern with the present. It would be a mistake to suppose that her inclination was at variance with her duty : she was natural ; she did not know how to conceal her feelings ; but subsequent events showed that, if she was attracted by the right course, when that course was easy, she lacked the necessary fortitude to take it when it was difficult."

Never was Napoleon's Court more gay than during the winter before the Russian War. Almost every night there was either a masked ball—the Emperor delighted in discovering or mystifying the masks—a concert, or a gala performance at the theatre or the opera. Music and the play were a great delight to the Empress. The company of the "Maison de Molière" were the best actors in Europe, and, while the Emperor preferred tragedies, she affected the lighter comedies and operas in which the French excelled. All dramatic and operatic stars were lured to Paris, and a gala night at the opera was a fine sight. The Imperial box faced the stage. On either side sat the foreign ambassadors and the French ministers. The whole of the grand tier of boxes was filled with court ladies in full dress. In the stalls were men only, but blazing with decorations. The second tier of boxes was filled by the holders of tickets sent out by court officials, ladies in full dress, men in court dress. Between the acts Imperial footmen in green liveries dispensed refreshments.

The Duc de Rovigo, Minister of Police, who saw as it were behind the scenes, describes Marie Louise's popularity.

"When Marie Louise spoke she fascinated one. Her success in France was her own work ; for I declare, on my honour, that on no occasion did the Government employ special means to secure her a good reception in public. When she was to make an appearance in a procession, or at the theatre, the only supervision exercised by the Government consisted in seeing that nothing occurred contrary to the most rigid etiquette ; it was the only control I permitted myself to have over her. For instance, when I knew that she intended going to the theatre I hired all the boxes opposite to hers, as well as those which might cause her any annoyance by overlooking her. I then took the precaution to send the tickets of the boxes to families of position who were glad to fill them. Thus I manipulated the audience who attended the play the same day as the Empress. As to precautions as to how she would be received by the pit, I never took any. The Empress Marie Louise, when she made a public entrance, was in the habit of making three curtsies, and they never waited for the third before giving thousands of cheers. It was her herself that dispensed me from taking any trouble about her. When she had saluted she sat modestly in the back of the box, for she disliked being made a cynosure."

The opposite of Josephine, Marie Louise did not understand that, "to gain the hearts of the French, it is only necessary to bow and smile *à propos*." The Duchesse supported her attitude when Madame Durand complained to the former that people at the opera were disappointed because she sat at the back of the box. "Why trouble?" said Madame de Montebello. Madame

Durand replied that many people only came to the opera to see her. "When one is straightforward, as she is," replied the Duchesse, "one should just be oneself, and not made an exhibition of for human respect." Thus it came about that she often looked bored in public, and hid the candle of her attraction under the bushel of private life. Thus it was that she was cold and weighed her words in public. She never held long conversations, and never talked politics. Though well read, she had none of the light sparkle, the *esprit*, which makes conversation in French. Herself so natural, she mistrusted the fashionable French character of the period, with its affectation of fainting and posing. But, if in public, she sometimes looked dull, from etiquette, once back in her own apartments she was cheerful, sweet, affable, adored by all who had to do with her. Used from her childhood to court life, she was easy to serve, for she knew how to combine two incompatible things—dignity and kindness. Never was she known to be out of temper; she was not fickle in her likings; she was to be relied on, and never sprinkled "court holy water"—capricious favouritism. Marie Louise could be even sweeter than was her face when she was at ease, either with her intimates or with those with whom she had to do.

With her husband's family Marie Louise got on much better than Josephine, because she was of a rank above them. Napoleon wished her to be polite and kind, but not familiar. Doubtless he considered his sisters not good examples or good companions for his innocent young wife. With none of them was she on such intimate terms as with the Duchesse de Montebello. The vulgar, dissipated, pretentious, quarrelling Bonaparte sisters were not the society to which Marie Louise had been accustomed in her own family. The

only member of her husband's family she really affected was Jérôme's good wife, Catherine of Würtemberg, a German, and of her own class.

Josephine had been at no pains with Madame Mère, but Marie Louise was considerate to her. That astute old lady was at first very reserved with her grand new daughter-in-law, but went the right way to work with her, and ended by making herself respected. One day, during the Emperor's absence, the Empress came to Madame Mère and invited herself to dinner. "Madame, I have come to ask for some dinner. Don't put yourself out ; I have not come as Empress—but just to see you !" "Mon Dieu !" replied Madame Mère, drawing her down to her and kissing her on the forehead, "I also shall not stand on ceremony. I will receive you as my daughter. The wife of the Emperor shall have the dinner of the Emperor's mother ! "

Marie Louise was not extravagant with dress as Josephine was, and never ran into debt. Every month she saw and signed a report of the last month's expenses. Balhouey, her private financial secretary, looked into all money matters, and settled them. With Josephine her principal lady had attended to them, and there had been trouble. But Napoleon appointed Balhouey to Marie Louise because he knew him to be an honest man. Her private charity was larger than people gave her credit for. Every month she gave away £200 out of her dress allowance of £2,000 a month. If a case of deserving charity was mentioned she never refused it. This sum was double that which Josephine had been used to give, and Josephine was considered very generous. But much of Marie Louise's alms adhered to the palm of the Duchesse de Montebello's secretary, as the Duchesse did not take the trouble to supervise the distribution herself.

In spite of her magnificent trousseau and her beautiful figure and her large dress allowances, Marie was not elegant and well dressed like Josephine, though she employed the same workpeople. It was partly her own fault, and partly the ridiculous etiquette which made it impossible for them to fit her themselves. Moreover, the Duchesse would not help in the matter, saying it was the concern of the *dame d'atours*, and not of the *dame d'honneur*. In later life Marie Louise's taste for dress developed even to excess.

Napoleon took an interest in her toilettes. He had a weakness for linen dresses because one of his early loves was wont to wear them. One day he came up to the Empress and asked eagerly if her dress was linen. When she replied in the negative he drew back, chilled. Another day he presented her with a mohair dress, which, however, she disliked, because it scorched if she went near the fire. Napoleon wished to encourage French industries, such as Lyons silks. No cottons or foreign wools were to be worn in the palace. He threatened to burn all Indian cashmeres. "When you give me anything as light and warm as cashmere I will wear it," said the Empress. Isabey made a design for a woollen dress and shawl with white ground, but she did not like it.

The Emperor was very fond of teasing and arguing with his wife's ladies, and was amused rather than offended if some inexperienced *femme rouge* or *femme noire* forgot herself so far as to answer him bluntly or disagree with him. One day, when he was in the Empress's room, he found he had forgotten his handkerchief. A beautiful lace and embroidered one belonging to her was offered him. He inquired the value, and was told that it was between seventy and eighty francs. Whereupon he remarked that, were he one of her ladies, he would steal one every day to increase his salary.

Napoleon had a great dislike to seeing novels lying about in his wife's rooms, or even in her ladies' drawing-room ; therefore when he came in the volumes had to be hurriedly hidden. Anxious, however, to minister to Marie Louise's great love of reading, he ordered his librarian to make a selection of books for her. But when they came he found among them the "Satires" of Juvenal, and of this he disapproved for his wife's reading. He reprimanded the librarian, and henceforth all Marie Louise's literature came to her through her husband's study.

She read elementary books in German, French, and Italian. Her reading was varied rather than deep. She was better acquainted with the history of the Empire than with that of France, but preferred ornithology, arboriculture, botany. She was well read in German, French, and English classics, which she had bought and read, and in plays. Her only hobby was collecting coins.

The Empress possessed a Mass-book for every day in the year. One of the most beautiful was an eighteenth-century missal which had belonged to Marguérite of Lorraine. Other religious books were "Conversations on the Sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ," a catechism, the "Bible for Young People." Cardinal de Rohan was her senior chaplain ; Duvoisin, Bishop of Nantes, her confessor. Very Gallican in his ideas, and author of the "Treatise on Tolerance," he told her, in answer to her inquiries, that, as she dined with the Emperor, she could dispense with fasting, as also with the public Easter Communion, which would have been distasteful to him.

## CHAPTER XI

### *THE APOGEE*

BY the spring of 1812 Napoleon had decided on war with Russia. Once again the hearths and homes of France had been ransacked for recruits, and these, stiffened with the veterans of a hundred fights, had gone to make up the Grande Armée, which was now awaiting, on the eastern frontier of the Empire, for its chief to take command. But, ere he launched out into the wide expanse of Russia, Napoleon intended to make sure of his communications with his base, so far behind him. He would fain leave Prussia, the Confederation of the Rhine, Austria, in utter subservience to his will. As to the latter Power, its tendency was not all that he could wish. The Kaiser, indeed, still dazzled with the success of his daughter's marriage, was distinctly pro-French. But then, as Napoleon said of him, "The Emperor Francis only keeps for himself the portfolio of *bien à faire* in his dominions," and it was Metternich who had to be taken into account. Now Metternich was decidedly pro-Russian.

To counteract him Napoleon determined to parade the Austrian alliance for all it was worth, and to parade it in the tangible form of Marie Louise herself. Ere he went on to take command of the Grande Armée he arranged to take the Empress with him to Dresden. Then, at the Court of his very good friend and ally, the King of

Saxony, he gave rendezvous to his father-in-law. Moreover, he issued invitations to his principal vassals of the Rhine Confederation, and to Prussia, to be of the company. They flew to obey his behest, but Prussia hung back.

But if the meeting at Dresden between Napoleon and Franz was to be purely political on Napoleon's part, undertaken to gain, if not Austria's active co-operation against Russia, at least her neutrality, to Marie Louise, all unaware that she was a trump card in his game, the journey was one of pure delight, for was she not to see her father again.

The precious boy was left behind, settled at Meudon for the summer, "in perfect health. The business of dentition is quite finished as regards the first teeth. He will be weaned at the end of the month." There is a pretty picture given of his first birthday, spent at the Trianon, playing on the lawn with his parents : Napoleon popping his *tricorne* hat on the child's fair curls, his sword in the baby hands, and the child toddling along, as if playing at blind-man's-buff with his father, and the Emperor flinging himself on the grass to prevent the tumbles.

The King of Rome had his own household. His wet-nurses and clothes cost 351,050 francs ; his household and pages 258,000 ; the heating of his rooms 416,000, his kitchen and cellar (!) one million francs ! "With much grace he received in his pavilion" in the Tuilleries gardens in the spring. At Compiègne a special arbour had been erected for him. Madame de Montesquiou once took the boy to Bagatelle to see Josephine, who wept over him. There were visits to St. Cloud and Rambouillet in the spring. The Emperor woke Marie Louise up at dawn to accompany him into Paris to see his works of improvement there. No lady went with

them, only one equerry or aide-de-camp. Sometimes her suite came to meet her, and if she was tired, which was not often the case, she drove home.

On May 8 the Emperor and Empress left St. Cloud in the same travelling carriage. The start had been delayed a month in consequence of the famine preparations. Napoleon took both households and the larger part of the Court with him, so that the beginning of the greatest war the world had hitherto known was like a triumphal progress of a conqueror. *En route* princes and crowned heads flew to do him honour—at Mayence the Grand-duke and Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt, the Prince of Anhalt: at Aschaffenburg, where he crossed the Rhine, the King of Würtemberg, the Grand-duke of Baden, while the Prince Primate lunched them. At Würzburg, to Marie Louise's delight, she was the guest of her uncle, the Duke. Next day they slept at Baireuth, where Napoleon's camp-bed is still shown, and where, tradition says, the White Lady of the Hohenzollerns, who haunts the castle, appeared to Napoleon and hunted him out of his bed into another room! Met at Freiburg by the King and Queen of Saxony, on the 26th they were at Dresden, and took up their residence in the state apartments of the King's palace.

Napoleon had driven across Germany the cynosure of multitudes whose curiosity overcame their detestation. "Never indeed had the potentate they hated appeared to them enhaloed with so much prestige. Folk spoke with a kind of awe of the 600,000 men who were flocking to his call from almost every corner of Europe; they suspected him of projects even more daring than those he had already conceived; people said he was passing through Russia on his way to India; they spread a thousand fictions a hundred times more mad than his real intentions, and so much had his repeated

successes discouraged them from hoping what their hatred longed for that they almost believed in the accomplishment of these designs. Huge bonfires were prepared along the road, and when night fell these were ignited to illumine his march, so that the excitement of curiosity almost produced the eagerness of love and joy."

Marie Louise travelled with a happy heart. In March she had written to her father : "The Emperor begs me to say a thousand kind things to you. He also begs me to inform you that if we have war he will take me to Dresden, where I shall spend two months, and where he hopes to see you also. You cannot imagine, dear papa, what delight this hope gives me. I am sure you will not refuse me the pleasure of bringing the dear mamma and my brothers and sisters to see me. But I beg you, dear papa, do not talk about it, for nothing is settled yet."

At Napoleon's *levée* next morning there was a "parterre of kings" and princes to pay their respects. This Dresden visit was the zenith of his splendour. Surrounded by a bevy of sovereigns, his Court surpassed them all in magnificence. They hastened to do him service, as vassals to a chief. The oldest names and the most illustrious families bowed before the conqueror's beck and call. As he said at St. Helena : "The reign of Maria Louise had been a very short one, but she must have enjoyed it, for she had the world at her feet."

Napoleon was not at Dresden as a guest, but as a host ; he did not accept hospitality, he gave it. His household had brought from Paris all that could enhance the splendour of this Court at a foreign Court—the crown diamonds, with which the Empress was literally covered, the silver gilt toilet service that the city of Paris had given her at her marriage. The entire company of the *Théâtre français* had been requisitioned to provide amuse-

ment, Talma at their head. "As at Tilsit, Napoleon crammed every one who approached him with diamonds."

Two days later came the state entry of Their Majesties of Austria. Ferdinand, the heir, had been left at home. His father excused his absence on the score of shyness. "Let me have him for a year," says Napoleon, "and I will unfreeze him!" Franz brought no Court with him, and felt small before his son-in-law's splendid surroundings. Napoleon was obliged to order that he should be treated with sufficient attention at receptions. At their first meeting the Kaiser related to the Emperor a genealogical discovery he professed to have made, to the effect that the Bonapartes had been rulers at Treviso in the early Middle Ages. Napoleon proudly responded that he was "content to be the Rudolf of Hapsburg of his family."

Mettternich, who of course had followed his master to Dresden to have a finger in the political pie, and who was outwardly obsequious and loyal to Napoleon, remarks that "the attitude of the two sovereigns was suitable to their respective positions, but was very cold." The truth is that Franz was torn between delight over his favourite daughter's magnificent position and a wounded *amour propre*, feeling that Austria was humiliated. Politically he hedged, as it were, promising assistance to Napoleon, and at the same time assuring Alexander that it should be void, yet all the time believing in Napoleon's future success and endeavouring to profit by it. Personally he was bored to death with all this show, and spent his leisure walking about the town shopping, and marvelling over the excessive energy and laboriousness of his son-in-law. It was Metternich, and Hardenberg, acting for Prussia, who did the diplomatic work and tried to circumvent Napoleon.

But the latter had yet another secret adversary to

contend with in the shape of the Kaiserinn, whom he now met for the first time. She, "whose grandparents had been dispossessed in Italy by General Bonaparte, distinguished herself by her aversion, which she vainly disguised; betrayed herself by impulses which Napoleon seized upon and smilingly crushed; but she used her *esprit* and charm to worm herself gently into people's hearts, and there instil her hatred of him."

Maria Ludovica Beatrix was now twenty-four, "pretty, piquante, rather uncommon, a pretty nun," spirituelle, and proud of her birth and her crown. She looked upon Napoleon as a parvenu, and took no pains to hide her contempt and dislike. Napoleon saw through her, and was determined to conquer her. As the Kaiserinn's health was so bad that she was unable in the procession to walk the long length of the suite of apartments, she was carried in a sedan-chair, by the side of which walked Napoleon, hat in one hand, the other leaning on the door, chatting playfully with his witty antagonist.

At Dresden Marie Louise must have noticed the great change that had come over her step-mother with regard to herself. The fact was that the Empress of Austria was jealous of the Empress of the French, though the Kaiser shut his eyes to it. The victim whom she had been instrumental in sacrificing to the Minotaur, instead of returning to them a martyr, reappeared not only as a magnificent sovereign, but also as an indulged, beloved, and happy wife, and a happy mother, which last phase must have rankled in the breast of the childless wife. The raw girl she had trained and ruled had shot up to a height far above her, and she was obliged to yield her precedence. At St. Helena Las Casas ventured to ask if the Kaiserinn was not the sworn enemy of Marie Louise. "Only in so far," replied Napoleon, "as went a nice little court hatred, a heart hated, veiled under daily letters of four

pages, full of tenderness and cajoling." "The Kaiserinn made up to Napoleon very much, and was specially coquette with him when he was present; but, as soon as his back was turned, she thought only of weaning Marie Louise from him; she was annoyed at being unable to succeed in obtaining any hold over him."

But she had to hide her annoyance. Nearly every morning she came to the Empress's toilette, and rummaging at her pleasure among the Parisian laces, ribbons, stuffs, shawls, and jewels of her wealthy step-daughter, she generally carried something away with her, for Marie Louise was nothing if not generous to lavishness in the way of presents.

Politics, during the stay at Dresden, troubled her not a whit. She gave herself up entirely to the pleasure of being with her family. Napoleon was extremely busy, occupied, not only with diplomacy, but also with minute details of the great military expedition afoot. Marie Louise, knowing how soon he must leave her, and anxious not to miss any of his society, scarcely dared to leave the palace; her step-mother laughed at her for her assiduous wifely attention.

Marie Louise was too young, too cheerful, and too natural not to take a certain pleasure in eclipsing her step-mother by the splendour of her appearance. "If Napoleon requested more reserve she resisted, even wept, and the Emperor yielded, either from affection, fatigue, or absent-mindedness. People even said that, in spite of her origin, this Princess, Marie Louise, permitted herself to mortify German *amour propre* by invidious comparisons between her old country and her new. Napoleon scolded her for it, but kindly. The patriotism he had evoked pleased him, and he fancied he could make up for injudicious remarks by presents."

At St. Helena Napoleon called his time at Dresden

his happiest day, for he had every sovereign except the Czar, George III., and the Sultan at his feet. The visit was of course celebrated with the usual round of festivities, at which Marie Louise appeared in all her reflected glory. But there was business done, too. Bassano, Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote to Otto, French ambassador at Vienna : "Their Majesties will probably leave Dresden the day after to-morrow. Their stay in this city has been marked by signs of the most reciprocal understanding and the greatest intimacy. To-day the two Emperors know and appreciate each other. The embarrassment and the timidity of the Emperor of Austria have been mollified by the frankness and straightforwardness of Napoleon. Long conversations have taken place between the two sovereigns. All the interests of Austria have been discussed at them, and I think the Emperor Francis has gleaned from his journey a more entire trust in the feelings of the Emperor Napoleon for him, and a rich harvest of good advice." But the minister had also noted the barely disguised attitude of the Kaiserinn, for he adds that, if the Emperor Francis had seen with his own eyes how happy the Empress Marie Louise was, "such a happy sight for a father had produced upon another august personage more surprise than emotion."

On the very eve of Napoleon's departure from Dresden the King of Prussia came hurrying at last in response to a command rather than an invitation. Prussia was still smarting from Jena, and under the French occupation ; but Napoleon soothed and smoothed matters somewhat. Nothing said or done at Dresden took from the visit its pacific aspect ; Napoleon was the sovereign rather than the general. Yet the rumbling of the growing storm was sounding nearer and nearer ; there was a feeling in the air as of living over a volcano.

Coming events cast their shadows before during that Dresden visit in more ways than one. A tiny cloud rose on the horizon of Marie Louise. She happened, one evening, to be passing down a gallery when she met one of her father's chamberlains, honorarily attached to her suite, half diplomat, half soldier. He was a personage of no importance, to whom the Empress merely threw a passing word and never gave a second thought. He wore a black bandage across his face, concealing the loss of one eye. It was General Neipperg.

On May 29 Napoleon left Dresden to join the Grande Armée, after bidding a very affectionate farewell to his wife, who seemed much troubled at parting with him. She had given him a new picture of herself by Gérard, with their boy in her arms. But her father came to spend the whole day with her to comfort her. Then he went on ahead to Prague to prepare for her reception, for she was to come to him there on a few weeks' visit. The French ambassador at Vienna was at once invited to join the Kaiser there. Received with very special attentions, he records his impressions to his chief in Paris.

"The Emperor of Austria had given orders to have me conducted, with the personages of my suite, to a mansion which had been prepared for me by the side of the palace. On descending from my carriage I was informed that all the service of the Court was at my disposal, including the carriages. This attention was all the more appreciable as on the mountain on which the castle of Prague stands there is no convenience for visitors. The next morning the Grand Chamberlain wrote to inform me that Their Majesties would be very pleased to receive me in private audience, and that I should have the honour of dining with them. I found the Emperor exceedingly pleased with all he had seen

and heard at Dresden. He congratulated himself on having made the intimate acquaintance of his august son-in-law ; he spoke feelingly of the happiness of his dear Louise ; he was impatiently awaiting her arrival at Prague. He was already enjoying the pleasure which would give her the grand and picturesque view from the castle down on to the fine river, and the great city all illuminated. The Empress of the French will enjoy a *coup d'œil* unique in its way, and which will strike her all the more as she has never seen Prague. Knowing that the Emperor prefers to speak German, I addressed him in that language and was glad I had done so. The monarch expressed his feelings in a manner which touched me very much. He told me that he should be delighted to keep his illustrious daughter with him as long as she wished to stay at Prague. To-morrow," he added, "I shall go with the Empress and meet her, and I shall enjoy every moment she can give me, and shall only part with her with the greatest regret." Then, speaking of the affairs of the moment, the Emperor said he could not understand Russia's behaviour ; they must have lost their heads at St. Petersburg to wish to measure themselves against a power as great as France. "Your army," he added, "has at least a hundred thousand men more than theirs, you have officers more distinguished than theirs ; your Emperor alone is equal to eighty thousand men."

The ambassador's interview with the Kaiserinn was very guarded, and the conversation general. Though the lady chatted "with infinite charm and ease, she touched only on the topics of literature and art, with which she occupied herself much." He went on to describe how "this Court, generally so simple in its habits, will be of great magnificence during the stay of Her Majesty the Empress" ; how the Kaiser, with all his great officials,

was going to meet her, how the guards and the police had been reinforced, and the Hungarian Noble Guard had been sent for from Vienna. The next day the Kaiser's young family were to arrive, and grand illuminations, balls, and other fêtes were in train. "The hearts of all the good people of Bohemia fly to meet her." The country, thought the ambassador, was ready to do anything demanded of it. General Klenau told him that if he were allowed to use the influence of St. Neppomuck, the patron saint of Bohemia, whose statue on the bridge is saluted by every passer-by, he could rely on raising two hundred thousand Bohemians in a short time, so much did he regret not being able to serve under the greatest captain the world had ever seen.

The drift of this remark shows that Marie Louise, now again, as ever, was a political card, played alternately by her husband or her father. For all the pomp and splendour with which she was to be surrounded at Prague she really was regarded by each as a kind of hostage. To Austria her presence was the security that the Austrian offensive and defensive alliance did not degenerate into mere vassalage; to France she was the guarantee of neutrality in Napoleon's rear should any reverse—which seemed so utterly improbable—befall him in Russia.

Napoleon's departure left Marie Louise at last free for a few days' sight-seeing in Dresden. Then, on June 4, to the sound of guns and bells, and her carriage escorted by the Saxon royal family, she started at dawn, accompanied by her uncle the Duke of Würzburg. At the frontier Bohemian magnates received her, and *chevaux légers* replaced the Saxon cuirassiers. Her route was one long ovation. At Töplitz she spent the night at the castle of Prince Clary, the Emperor's Grand

Chamberlain, deputed to meet her at the frontier. The whole town was *en fête* and illuminated, and a procession of miners with swinging lanterns serenaded the Empress under her windows with verses which each ended with a cheer. At five o'clock the next evening salvoes of artillery at Prague announced her approach. In state her father and step-mother met her at the abbey of St. Margaret, and she got into their carriage, an open one, that the populace might have a good view of her. Thus she entered Prague by torchlight, sitting to the right of the Empress, passing through the illuminated streets between a double line of soldiers to the welcoming din of cannon and bells and trumpets.

The castle of the Hradschin, backed by the Laurienzenberg, towers, a vast pile, for centuries the residence of Bohemian kings, above the most imposing of the Imperial capitals. Here, at the foot of the grand staircase, a crowd of city magnates and of court officials awaited the Empress's arrival. Prince Clary, Counts Clam, Kinsky, and Trautmannsdorf, were among those attached to her suite. "Her Majesty," writes Count Otto, "appeared but little fatigued by her journey, but for a slight cold, which did not prevent her being very cheerful, and showing to her parents how pleased she was to be in the midst of them."

Good news of the progress of the Grande Armée helped to make Marie Louise very happy at Prague. The Archduke Charles arrived, and the Imperial family was now complete. Nor was a final touch wanting. On June 11 she wrote a warm, loving letter to the Comtesse Colloredo on the delightful news she had heard from her father that her old friend was coming to see her. The Kaiser had forgiven the past, Count Colloredo was dead, and on such a happy occasion as the present Marie Louise was not to miss the old friend to whom she had remained

so attached. Only one cloud now overshadowed her happiness, and that was the Emperor's absence. "My delight of being with my family is clouded by the grief of being separated from the Emperor. I cannot be happy except with him."

Madame de Crenneville was ill, and could not accompany her mother. To her, therefore, Marie Louise writes news of her son, "who is weaned, and walks alone at thirteen months, but the happiness of being with a father whom I love so tenderly is marred by the absence of the Emperor, which is enough to damp this joy, and I shall be only quite peaceful and contented when I see him again. God preserve you from such a separation! it is too cruel for a loving heart, and if it lasts long I cannot bear it." She tells of the pleasure of having Countess Colloredo with her, and adds that her health is much improved by the air of Prague. "We make long excursions; in the evenings we are *en famille*. Yet I shall tear myself away from this visit to return to France, where an interest which is very dear recalls me, and which is the only one which can console me a little for the absence of his father."

Nevertheless, Marie Louise contrived to enjoy herself amazingly at Prague, where everything was done to amuse her. She was the centre of everything as she had never been before. What a change from her girlhood's status at her father's Court, a mere Archduchess, barely introduced to society, with no will of her own! What a change even from merely living in the reflected glory of Napoleon! Fêtes succeeded each other. The Kaiser gave and received state banquets at which she was seated between her parents and served by Count Clary, the Grand Chamberlain. The various Archdukes, uncles and brothers, and notabilities of all kinds, including that pillar of society, the old Prince de Ligne, had assembled to meet

her. She gave afternoon dances for her three young sisters, and the young Colloredo people ; to which, by her special wish, only her household were invited. With great pleasure and pride she exhibited to her relations her new accomplishment of horsemanship in the riding-school of Prince Wallenstein's great palace ; a few days later she went out riding with her father, who, seeing how delighted she was with the mount he had provided, made her a present of him, and she promptly named the horse Hdradschin.

Marie went sight-seeing about Prague, to the Museums of Natural History and Antiquities, to the School of Art, to the Library, where she saw the earliest book printed in Bohemia, in 1468, a ninth-century Slavonian poem written on parchment, a beautiful missal of 1360 with exquisite miniatures, and last, but not least, John Hus's autograph challenge which he stuck up on the gate of the University of Prague, offering to dispute the articles of his belief with all comers ; also an autograph letter of Ziska's, and the MSS. of Tycho Brahé, 1599.

Then she made excursions in the country : to the pretty public garden of Bubenz on the Moldau, the gardens of Count Wratislaw, the hermitage of St. Yvan, and the old castle of Karlstein. A charming trip was made down the river to Count Chotek's castle, on a pretty island, when the Imperial guests were rowed about the numerous branches of the Moldau. The Burgrave of Bohemia, Count Kolowrat, gave her a splendid ball, and there were gala performances at the Grand Theatre, one of Paér's operas being specially performed. The last day of her stay there was an evening fête on the island of Arquebusiers.

On July 1 the happy time came to an end. Escorted with pomp through a vast crowd to the outskirts of the city, Marie Louise, accompanied by her father, left Prague early, and went by Schöffen to Karlsbad. At

Frankenthal they went six hundred feet down a tin-mine, the Empress in an arm-chair, her ladies descending after her one by one. At Freyheim there were national dances and music. The next day came the parting with her father. Under what different circumstances they were to meet again! With her step-mother she had parted at Prague “plus franchement que l'on ne s'était retrouvée.” A little flattering purr from the Kaiserinn had followed her. She bids her husband tell Marie Louise how glad she had been to see her and how hourly she thinks of her.

Sleeping at Bamberg in the Duke of Würtemberg's palace, she reached the next day Würzburg, where she was the guest of her uncle in his magnificent palace, the Versailles of Germany. They made excursions to the castle of Warneck, water-parties and illuminations took place, and, what must have pleased Marie Louise most, concerts conducted by the musical Duke himself.

On July 18 the booming of the cannon of the Invalides told the Parisians that their Empress was once more among them.

## CHAPTER XII

### *THE RUMBLING OF THE STORM*

MARIE LOUISE'S first term of grass widowhood was tragic in the contrasts between its beginning and ending ; between her proud and happy time at Prague, the "world at her feet," to be followed by a loneliness at St. Cloud, accentuated by her late reunion with her family, clouded by Malet's conspiracy, overshadowed by the disasters of the retreat from Russia, and finally, closing with Napoleon's furtive return, almost as a fugitive—in a word, the beginning of the end.

Yet the Empress's return to France was welcomed with enthusiasm. Two days later *Le Moniteur* reports : "An immense crowd went yesterday, Sunday, to St. Cloud, in lovely weather. At six in the evening the Empress drove through the park in a *calèche*. At the sight of her Majesty and the King of Rome most hearty cheers arose from all sides, and accompanied her on her way."

But Marie Louise was sad and lonely. Her first words, written to her father on her return, are : "God grant that my husband may soon come back, for the separation is very painful, and I am not brave enough not to complain."

She found her boy delicious ; a strong and beautiful child at a most bewitching age. "My son is very well," she writes to his grandfather, "and never stronger. He



CHÂTEAU DE ST. CLOUD.  
Marie Louis's favourite French home.



already runs quite alone, and has already fifteen teeth ; but he does not talk yet."

To Madame de Crenneville she enlarges more, saying that, after three months' absence, she would hardly have known him, that he " daily grows sweeter and grows much and becomes prettier," walks, but is backward in talking, and she ends by begging for details of Victoire's boy and sending a fashion-plate of children's frocks and a present of patterns.

Gérard had just finished a beautiful portrait of this exceptionally lovely child, and the Empress despatched Bausset, the *préfet du palais*, with it to the doting father. Travelling night and day across Europe, Bausset reached Napoleon's camp on the heights above the Borodino. The Emperor's delight at the picture was touching. He sent for all his staff to admire it, and then had it placed on a chair outside his tent that his *braves* might share his pleasure and admiration. "Messieurs," he said to his generals, "if my son were but fifteen years older, he would be here in person, and not in portrait."

On the Sunday after her return the Empress, in the Gallery of Apollo, received the homage of the great bodies of the State, and the diplomatic corps, and the persons who had the *entrée* to the grand receptions. For, though Napoleon was ruling France from a distance of over two thousand miles, Marie Louise was to be his representative, a mere figure-head, indeed, but a pleasing one. For "her manner was easier, she was less stout, and her figure perfect. Her fine eyes were full of smiles, and a great freshness made her pleasant to look upon, a noble and graceful figure." She was still very shy, but being now cast upon her own resources—playing first fiddle, as it were—she made a great effort to be gracious, and that very effort made her stiff. Every Sunday after

Mass she received all who had been presented at Court, and who might come without invitation, and went round the gallery into which the chapel opened speaking to every one. On important occasions she also had state receptions. Napoleon, always considerate towards her, had arranged that, in order that she should not be dull, she should, every evening, receive persons who were on the list of *petites entrées*, people whom he thought she would like. In this small circle she was quite at her ease, full of charm and freshness, asking those she wished to play billiards with her, the game showing off her fine figure to advantage; whist-tables were always set out in the adjoining drawing-room, and a concert or a play always brought the evening to a close.

On August 15 the Empress drove into Paris, where the Fête-Napoléon was celebrated with enormous enthusiasm by huge crowds. In the Throne-room of the Tuileries she received the great dignitaries and the diplomats, surrounded by her Court, after which she heard Mass in the chapel, celebrated by her chaplain, Cardinal de Rohan, and a Te Deum was sung. In the evening *Numa*, an opera by her master, Paër, was played in the palace theatre. Then the Empress stepped out on to the balcony of the Salles des Maréchaux and at sight of her a roar of cheering rose up from the crowded gardens and terraces into the summer night. From the balcony she listened to an open-air concert, watched the fireworks in the Place de la Concorde; then back to St. Cloud and her boy, to sleep.

Meanwhile Alexander was luring Napoleon on into Russia, while behind him lay Austria in Metternich's clever "neutrality." Till Smolensk, all was success; Napoleon should have called a halt; but hitherto he had only signed peace in his enemies' capitals. A month after the Fête-Napoléon, an apparent conqueror, he was

entering a deserted Moscow, with plans for the East and India simmering in his dazzled brain.

But, though life at St. Cloud flowed on in uneventful monotony, Marie Louise was ill and worried. There was discontent in France ; a new levy had been ordered, and now that Napoleon was so far away tongues wagged more freely. There were no parties in Paris that autumn ; every one was uneasy. In every drawing-room hung a war-map, into which anxious women stuck pins as they followed the movements of their nearest and dearest. By the beginning of October bad news was beginning vaguely to circulate.

Marie Louise, sending to Countess Colloredo a watch and a doll for her little Ferdinand and Caroline, hopes that "the brilliant victories of the Emperor may soon send him back." Glad to be back again with her son, and in the midst of a people she esteems as much as the French, "I have found my son grown and more beautiful ; he is so intelligent that I am never tired of having him with me ; but, in spite of all his delightful ways, he cannot succeed in making me forget, even for a few moments, his father's absence. My health was all the better for the journey, which did not tire me ; but since my return it has been affected by my mental anxiety, and I have been very ailing for a long time. I am better now, without having taken anything, for when I asked the doctors' advice they only prescribed me what was impossible—try to be reasonable and tranquil."

On October 4 the Empress drove into Paris to hear Mass and a Te Deum at the Tuileries for the victories, and a Te Deum was sung at Notre Dame. At the end of the month burst the bombshell of Malet's plot.

At eight o'clock in the morning of October 23 the Empress was startled by a sudden clatter of horses' hoofs beneath her windows as they galloped into the courtyard

of St. Cloud. Rushing on to the balcony in her dressing-gown, her hair all hanging down, she saw a troop of the *Garde à cheval*, sent in hot haste by the Minister of War.

There was mischief afoot in Paris. But Marie Louise did not lose her head. One thought of her son's safety, a rush to his rooms, and then she calmly gave orders to have the handful of troops which constituted the guard beaten to arms, the gates closed, and the palace put in a state of defence. There were but 42 infantry at St. Cloud, under command of Beauharnais, the *chevalier d'honneur*. Nineteen of them were posted in the grand courtyard under the commandant, 15 in the square, 7 at the cross-roads. Of the mounted troops, 25 in number, 10 were kept as orderlies, 19 picketed on guard to the Empress and the King of Rome. In the barracks at Sèvres were 126 men in readiness, including mounted men, *gendarmes d'élite*, and sappers. Beauharnais hastily ordered reinforcements from Courbevoie, Rueil, and from the depot of the guard at St. Cyr and at St. Germain. Scarcely had this been done than a second messenger came riding from Paris with the news that order had been restored. At the very last minute, owing to the promptitude and alertness of one man, one of the most audacious conspiracies of history had petered out.

Charles François de Malet, a former general in Moreau's army, though of ancient Franche-Comté nobility, suspected in 1807 by Napoleon of republican plots, had been shut up in the Conciergerie, and then detained in a madhouse. "More of a fanatic than a conspirator," yet there was much method in his madness. Brooding over his treatment, he hatched and nearly brought forth his revenge. The story reads like that of a comic-opera conspiracy. The keynote was to spread a report that Napoleon had died in Russia, and, by

obtaining possession of the fortress and garrison of Paris, to set up a provisional government, of which Malet was to be the head.

The invention of the plot was Malet's own. He had but two accomplices ; one, the Abbé Lafon, drew up the legal documents required.

At ten o'clock on the night of October 22 Malet escaped from his madhouse to Spanish priests in the Place Royale, where his wife had secretly sent his uniform. There he met by appointment one Rateau, a corporal of the National Guard, who disguised himself as an officer of artillery, and a sucking barrister named Bouteux, who made himself up as a commissary of police. To pass the time the three conspirators sat down to a punch supper.

At three in the morning came the moment for action. They hied them to the Popincourt barracks, only to find that there was no admittance at night except by the colonel's orders. The latter, Soulier, lived out of barracks. Malet, pretending to be General Lamotte, woke him up incontinently, and, breaking to him the news of Napoleon's death, reduced the easily-convinced Soulier to tears. The ordering the colonel to call his regiment to arms, to read to them the forged orders, and to place it under the command of the *soi-disant* General Lamotte, the promising him at the same time promotion to a brigade and presenting him with an order on the treasury for £4,000, were the next steps. *C'en est que le premier pas qui coûte.* Malet thereupon marches away at the head of twelve hundred men of the tenth cohort of the National Guard down the Rue St. Antoine to the prison of Laforce.

This he has now no difficulty in getting opened to him, nor in liberating Generals Guidal and Lahorie, political prisoners, upon whose necks he falls, confiding to them

the rôles they are to play. With an armed force they are sent to arrest the Ministers of War and of Police, and the Prefect of Police.

The latter, Pasquier, gentle and inoffensive, working betimes in his office, allowed himself to be put into a cab with his head subordinate and driven off to Laforce. As for his chief, Savory, Duc de Rovigo, Minister of Police, let him tell his own tale.

While the Grand Armée was preparing to retreat, and France was apparently quiet, it was his duty to write a daily report to the Emperor. This he was in the habit of sending off in the mornings, rising early. On October 23 he had written all night, and had gone to bed, and so was asleep when a noise in the next room aroused him. The door was broken open by an armed soldier, and Rovigo sprang out of bed in his shirt to see what was the matter. The next room was full of troops, there was a great noise, and some one shouted—"Call the general!"

Lahorie appeared. Now he had been chief of the staff of Moreau in the army of the Rhine during the revolutionary wars, and was a great friend of Rovigo's.

"The Emperor has been shot in front of Moscow on October 8!" he cries.

"But I had a letter from him yesterday of that date!" remonstrates the astonished Minister of Police, and attempts to undeceive the soldiers.

But General Guidal rushes forward and points his sword at Rovigo's breast. A sergeant throws himself between them; Lahorie, in spite of Rovigo's efforts, stabs the sergeant, whose family Rovigo subsequently cared for.

Seeing that there was no help for it, the latter prepared to allow himself to be removed to Laforce by Lahorie. To gain time, however, he proceeded to dress

as slowly as possible. On his way to prison he opened the cab door as they were passing the Tour de l'Horloge, and tried to escape. But his captors ran after him, crying : "Stop him ! Stop him !" and stopped he was. But the delay and the resistance of Rovigo had caused a hitch in the carrying out of Lahorie and Guidal's second step, the arrest of Feltre, Minister of War.

Meanwhile the egregious Colonel Soulier had been complacently carrying out the conspirators' behest, which was to go to the Hôtel de Ville and to take possession of it for the sittings of the Provisional Government, which Malet was to form. The Prefect of Paris, Comte Frochot, was on his way into the city. In the Rue Faubourg St. Antoine he was met by a clerk bearing the laconic note : "Come quickly. *Fuit Imperator.*" When he reached the Hôtel de Ville Soulier showed him the forged orders, and he had the rooms prepared.

The intrepid Malet had reserved for himself the most difficult feat of all. It was to secure the Headquarter Staff, which meant the military command of Paris. Ordering all the city gates to be closed, and occupying with troops the Bank and the Treasury, with half a company of men he marched to the Place Vendôme, and forced his way into the room where General Hullin was in bed. Malet told him the news and that his orders were to arrest him. Hullin seemed inclined to believe him when the voice of Madame Hullin in bed in the alcove suggested that Malet should show his papers.

"Yes ! where are your orders ?" cried Hullin.

"Here !" replied Malet, firing his pistol and breaking Hullin's jaw.

Then he rushed downstairs to the *entresol* of a house opposite, the Headquarter Staff office, where he found Colonel Doucet, the Adjutant-General, Colonel Laborde,

and a police-officer. This latter, in an evil hour for Malet, recognized him. Asking him what he was doing out of his madhouse, he turned to Doucet and told him to arrest Malet.

But Malet was equal to the occasion. Backing against the chimney-piece, he put his hand in his pocket to pull out his pistol and blow out Doucet's brains. But the colonel saw Malet's movement reflected in the mirror and threw himself upon him and prevented his firing. At the same moment Laborde seized his hands, shouting : "To arms!"

The sentry rushed in. Malet was thrown down, gagged, and dragged to the balcony and exhibited to his troops of the 10th cohort as an impostor.

The next thing was to stamp out the plot in action elsewhere. At the Ministry of Police Lahorie was found installed, busy sending out official circulars in the intervals of trying on a new official coat! He was clapped under arrest. At the Hôtel de Ville the poor deluded Prefect of the Seine was discovered hastily arranging rooms for the sitting of the Provisional Government, and was abruptly stopped in the process. Meanwhile Feltre, the War Minister, who, but for Rovigo's plucky procrastinations, would have shared his fate, now thoroughly alarmed, sent the *Garde à cheval* galloping off to St. Cloud.

Rovigo and Pasquier were released ; Malet and his coadjutors took their places in Laforce. By noon all was calm again, Paris as usual, and the Hôtel de Ville in its normal condition.

Marie Louise had shown calmness and courage. Queen Hortense "went off to St. Cloud yesterday. I wanted to kiss that poor little King of Rome, whom I found very well. The Empress was very well, and would have it that it 'was nothing but an affair of Hussars.' Happily she had not been alarmed for

her son. She told me she would come and spend the day with me at S. Leu to-morrow."

The Duchesse d'Abrantès writes that the Empress was "not alarmed, but went cantering again about the woods round St. Cloud, though there might have been other conspirators lurking there." Then, as if loath to say anything to the Empress's credit, the Duchesse adds: "But it was not courage; it was, in fact, not bothering about the affair (she never did understand); and a trait in her character."

Doubtless such a plot was almost inconceivable to the daughter of a father so immutably fixed on his throne as his most sacred Majesty Franz II. "She haughtily asked Cambacérès, the Arch-Chancellor," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, "what could have happened to her." But Cambacérès had condemned a king to death and had twice seen Franz II. fly before the French. He answered with unusual sharpness: "*Ma foi ! madame.* Your Majesty is very happy to be able to look at things so philosophically, for she no doubt knows that it was General Malet's plan to send the King of Rome to public charity—that is to say, to the Foundlings—and as for Your Majesty, her fate was to be decided later.'

"Marie Louise was never told, but it was settled, and it would not have been agreeable to the pride of a daughter of the Cæsars."

Madame d'Abrantès, in her malice—she was smarting under the disgrace and non-employment of her husband—may have been exaggerating; but Malet's official documents showed that he considered the Empress a valuable asset in his game and had arranged for her person to be secured. For he had made out an order for General Deriot, chief of the Headquarter staff, and commanding the depot of the National Guard, to hastily occupy Sèvres, Ville d'Avray and St. Cloud, and to

protect Marie Louise, saying : " It is to the whole nation that we have become responsible for the life of Marie Louise ; as much for the nation's honour as for the guarantee she gives us while she is in our power of the conduct of the Emperor Francis towards France. As soon as you have made your arrangements you will do well to go off to St. Cloud to reassure that Princess on her situation, while waiting for the Government to do it in diplomatic form."

From Marie Louise's reply to her father's hasty letter of inquiry, it is evident that she underrated the gravity of the peril through which she had passed. " The commotion which some madman has caused," she calls it. " I know too well the good character of the nation, and its devotion to the Emperor, to have had a single instant of fear."

But Paris had received an unpleasant shock. True, as Queen Hortense writes, *l'affaire Malet* " made us laugh, which is not amusing for the persons laughed at." The *salons* rang with merriment over the hoaxing of the distinguished officials, and chaffed Rovigo and his fellow victims on Malet's feat—" tour de force"—and said that the wife of the Commandant of Paris in her night-dress made the best show of any one. But, to those who looked below the surface, Malet's straw showed the direction of the wind. The ease and calmness with which the army accepted the report of the death of the Emperor was an unpleasant and alarming revelation. Perhaps, after all, the Empire was built upon a volcano and not upon a rock. Rovigo writes that he found the affair more tragic than ridiculous. A few minutes more and Feltre would have been arrested, and Malet master of the Treasury, the Post, the Telegraph. An excitable nation, weary of war and turmoil, would have learnt the news of the Russian disasters which was safely locked in official breasts. Had

the Emperor suddenly returned, who can say but what he himself might have been arrested? Another unpleasant sidelight was the fact that no one had given a moment's thought to the succession of the King of Rome if his father was dead. As the judge at the trial said to poor silly Colonel Soulier : "Did it not strike you to shout, 'L'Empereur est mort, vive l'Empereur !'" Malet's attempt to blow up the Empire had failed, but he had left upon it indelible scars. "Conspiracies generally end in the ruin of the conspirators and of the reputations of those against whom they have conspired."

When all was over Feltre made a great show, parading Paris on horseback at the head of troops. Recriminations between the war and the police offices ensued, and no mercy was shown to any actively implicated in the affair. In five days fourteen were arrested, tried, and condemned. Twelve were shot, including Malet, Guidal, and Lahorie.

But there was more behind the plot than Malet's well-known republicanism. On his list of proposed members for the Provisional Government were found distinguished royalist names. His proclamation called to the Pope to come to Paris and make the nation forget its woes. What should the Pope do in Paris, except to crown a king ? If so, then Malet was a Monk *manqué*.

On the day of Malet's plot Napoleon was manœuvring round Malo-Yaroslawitz after the bloody day in which he so nearly himself fell a prey to a band of Cossacks. On November 6, the very day on which a courier came through—the first for ten days—with the news of the conspiracy, the weather changed. The blue sky changed to steel. "Let the snow only come !" had said Kütusoff. It came.

That year the Fête of Austerlitz was put off from December 5 to 6, the latter being a Sunday, that it

might be kept with greater enthusiasm. The Empress had moved to the Tuileries for the winter ; there were the usual receptions, Mass, Te Teum, opera, illuminations ; but while the salvoes for Austerlitz were awaking tranquil Paris Napoleon was fleeing incognito from the wretched vestiges of his Grande Armée and the horrors of the retreat.

As yet no bad news had been officially announced in Paris, but here and there private letters had filtered through. The Government reports lied about the weather. One, on November 11, in the *Moniteur*, merely mentioned that the roads were very bad, that fifty thousand draught-horses had perished, one hundred ammunition waggons destroyed, but that the Emperor's health was good. Meanwhile he had halted in his flight, and was hiding at Dresden, throwing dust in his father-in-law's eyes, and begging him for help of troops. Finally, he launched the fateful Twenty-ninth Report. It burst on thunderstruck Paris like a bombshell. It told of the loss of horses and cavalry, of regiments reduced to four companies of one hundred and fifty men each, of officers marching in the ranks ; it described the passage of the Beresina. Paris was convulsed.

On the heels of the report came Comte Anatole de Montesquiou, son of the *gouvernante*, and Napoleon's aide-de-camp, to prepare the way for the Emperor's return. He brought with him eight Russian flags and the news of the victory of the Beresina, ten thousand prisoners, and assured Marie Louise of the Emperor's good health ; but he had no recent news of him, and did not know where he was.

Napoleon followed the very next day. At half-past eleven on a December night he arrived quite alone with Caulaincourt in a shabby post-chaise, and had some difficulty in getting the palace gates opened to him.

Marie Louise, sad and ailing, was just getting into bed when a noise was heard in the adjoining salon. Two men in cloaks suddenly entered. The *dame rouge* screamed, and, terrified, tried to bar the door. The frightened Empress sprang out of bed. One of the men threw back his heavy fur coat, and Marie Louise found herself in her husband's arms.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *THE LULL*

"I AM sure you will share with me the joy which I experienced in seeing him again after an absence of more than seven months. The New Year could not begin under happier auspices for me," and she adds that when the Countess Colloredo sent her wishes for her birthday (on December 12), she little guessed "how soon they would be realized, and that I should be so happy as to find myself back in Paris before the end of the year with the Emperor." Her health is better, she mentions, and "should be stronger now that there are no sorrows to undermine it."

Napoleon took up the reins of government with a firm hand. Two days after his return he held a great reception of the Court, the officials, and the great bodies of the State. In his reply to their congratulations, he made excuses for himself, and only vouchsafed the remark : "My army has suffered losses." Then Their Majesties and the Court adjourned to the opera of *Jerusalem Delivered*.

But it was a dull season at Court, with few fêtes. At first Napoleon found his prestige tarnished, and was almost afraid to show himself. Annoyed that such swift retribution had been dealt to the Malet conspirators, he told Cambacérès he wished he had been allowed to show clemency.

But all that the nation wanted was peace. Austria wanted peace, too, and Metternich made tentative overtures to the foreign minister. The Kaiser in his New Year letters to Napoleon and Marie Louise, wished also for peace.

Marie Louise, sending a *déjeuner* service of Sèvres china painted with views of the French palaces, as a New Year's gift to her father, likewise prayed for peace. "God permit that your wishes may be granted and that we may soon have peace. . . . God grant the Emperor does not leave me again. The idea of his departure is such a subject of terror to me, after all the anxiety I have gone through last year. I share your wish of soon seeing a long peace, for I dare not think of the moment when my husband will return to the battle-fields."

Even the little King of Rome prayed for peace. Napoleon, passing his door at bed-time, overheard his little supplication, probably instigated by "Maman 'Quiou,'" that "God would pour into Papa's mind the wish for peace, for France and for us all."

Napoleon smiled and passed on ; but did not heed.

His life during the next few months was a strange medley of domestic bliss, and of the most strenuous exertions to raise a fresh army, to plan for new campaigns. Peace was the last thing he contemplated. But he might have had it then.

Full of confidence and energy, never did he hunt and shoot more frequently than at Christmas and the New Year 1812. He had plays and fêtes to order. Queen Hortense was commanded to give an entertainment at Neuilly. "One went to the ball," writes Chateaubriand, "death in one's heart, mourning inwardly for one's friends and relations."

The sick and wounded relics of the Grande Armée began to dribble back into France, and tell their own tale

of disaster. Comte Cznersichof, the Czar's spy, blazed awhile in Parisian society, then suddenly crossed the frontier, leaving behind him traces that the War Office had been tampered with, and the French plans and army statistics betrayed. The Duc de Bassano, Minister of Foreign Affairs, underrated the resources and the feelings of Russia and of Austria; Marie Louise, only too glad that he should stand up for Austria's loyalty, made much of Madame de Bassano, who was the Duchess of Montebello's intimate friend.

In the midst of all this unrest and insecurity, the little king was a ray of sunshine. One day the Comtesse de Montesquiou took him to Bagatelle in the Bois de Boulogne, Josephine's winter residence, when the latter wept over him. Never was a more doting father than Napoleon—a far tenderer parent, strange to say, than his sweet and gentle mother. The Duchesse d'Abrantès tells how one day she went to the little King's nursery and found the Emperor there, "playing with him in the way he did with everything he loved—that is to say, teasing him. The Emperor had been riding and had a whip in his hand, which the child wanted. When his little hand had succeeded at last in seizing it, he shrieked with laughter and then kissed his father, as usual, as the latter wished. The Emperor enjoyed the game; his moist eyes showed how happy he was.

"'Isn't my son beautiful, Madame Junot?' he said to me. 'Agree with me that he is beautiful!'

"I could testify, without flattery, that he was beautiful as an angel. How lovely he was, that child! When he drove in the Tuileries gardens in that gilt chaise, shaped like a shell and drawn by two young sheep which François the groom had trained, and which had been given him by his aunt the Queen of Naples . . . he resembled the cameos of Herculaneum. Oh! how lovely he was, and



NAPOLEON AND MARIE LOUISE.



how happy his father was ! It was the last smile of Fortune, but it was very sweet."

And then Marie Louise, writes her chamberlain, seemed to have for her husband a "real love. It did not displease the Emperor when he noticed it. Perhaps there was even a little affectation in the *bourgeois* conjugal affection with which he treated the daughter of the Emperor of Germany."

But 1813 dawned. It happened on a Friday, too—evil omen for the Empire. Napoleon might have saved that Empire had he read aright the signs of the times ; but he fancied he was where he had been a year ago—before Moscow !

The last day of the year saw a secret understanding between Russia and Prussia. But Stein and the King threw dust in Napoleon's eyes, even suggesting a marriage between his family and Prussia, and Napoleon did not gauge the importance of the *Tugendbund* and of the rising national feeling—he, who had seen patriotism and republicanism wane into despotism.

Nevertheless, he strengthened his ground where he could, and on January 19 a most momentous hunting-party took place in the forest of Fontainebleau. The Empress was in the highest spirits, and it was not only the pleasure of the chase and the horse exercise that she loved that made her so happy. For the Hapsburgs have always been devoted sons of the Church of Rome, and the rupture of her husband with the Pope, and the latter's refusal to recognize her marriage, must have been a source of trouble and dread to one so devoutly brought up. Now, Marie Louise was happy in the hope that reconciliation was near.

After hunting and lunching at Grosbois with the Prince of Neufchâtel, in the afternoon the Emperor had the hounds called off, and, to the astonishment of their

suite, Napoleon and Marie Louise rode into the Cour du Cheval Blanc at Fontainebleau. Orders went forth that the night would be spent at the palace. Then ensued bewilderment and bewailing of the suite, all in hunting dress, for no one had any clothes or servants with them. The Empress alone was in the Emperor's secret. Her ladies spent a miserable night sitting up round the fires in the half-warmed palace.

The Pope, the venerable prisoner of Fontainebleau, came forward to meet the Emperor. It was no case of kneeling, of humbly imploring the blessing of the Holy Father. They embraced as might two monarchs—the conqueror and the conquered.

Then began a series of *tête-à-tête* conferences which lasted five days. At first Napoleon found the gentle old man with the strong conscience hard to bend to his will. In the end a compromise was reached, the famous Concordat of Fontainebleau signed, by which the Pope gave up temporal power, and the States of the Church to Napoleon, who, on his part, forgave eleven of the thirteen cardinals who had withheld him at his marriage.

Marie Louise had been waiting and watching anxiously the trend of affairs. When all was signed she came of her own accord into the Pope's presence, and, kneeling down, received at last his blessing. Once more she had inward peace; her conscience and her heart were one. The text of the Concordat was at once sent to the Kaiser.

In January the Czar entered Prussia, which began to arm. But Metternich was still nursing Napoleon over the alliance and the Kaiser wrote, harshly enough, that he held himself bound by the most sacred ties to the Empire, the welfare of which was his only aim. So, her conscience at rest, her anxieties lulled, Marie Louise was happy at

this time. "My son is splendidly well," she writes to Madame de Crenneville, "and he has never had a moment's serious illness since his birth, and he has cut all his teeth, three months ago; but his tongue is still tied and if he did not say 'Papa,' I should be afraid he is dumb." Sequestered and isolated, never consulted by her husband, never allowed to converse with any one who could tell her about the real danger of affairs, her life during this winter seems, after all, very natural to any light-hearted young woman of twenty-one, happy with her husband and child. Yet the Duchesse d'Abrantès blames her.

"During the time that the clouds thickened more and more and the storm drew daily nearer, during this time what do you think she was doing, she who should have trembled and been anxious lest the Austrian cannon should come roaring upon the heights of Montmartre? Marie Louise, *enfin*, what was she doing? . . . wool-work . . . she played the piano . . . went to see her son, as I have told you already, at a fixed hour . . . had him brought to her in the same way, and the child, who knew his nurse better than his mother, would hardly hold out his little pink cheek that the latter might press it with her lips . . . and yet, how the Emperor loved him! *Mon Dieu!* . . . He loved him more than he ever loved a woman, and God has punished him by that which he preferred to the other. . . .

"Marie Louise was not beloved by any one of us, and it was very natural. Perpetually withdrawn into her most inner privacy, she only knew intimately Madame de Montebello. Without doubt it was a good choice, but nevertheless she should have had more *laissez-aller* at the little *soirées* which the Emperor had arranged for her by only admitting to them forty or fifty women, who took turns—that is the word—so that every evening there

were about ten or fifteen. This included the *dames du palais* and the ladies of the households of the Princesses of the Imperial family. . . . It was not amusing ; I have gone through it, and, but for the ear of the Empress, who made it her duty ‘to lend an ear’ to the good pleasure of every one, one would have been imperially bored . . . as for Marie Louise she passed her time, as I have told you . . . riding on horseback . . . not at all like Catherine I., to accompany the Emperor to the war, but to gallop—I think the word is literally true—she galloped to gallop. . . . Yet the whole of Europe was arming itself against the man who was her husband before God and before man . . . the half of her life . . . the father of her child. And among this Europe whose billows were, perhaps, going to overwhelm us, was her father, her mother, her brothers ! Had she no word to say to them ? Could she not throw herself before them, crying : ‘This land of France, it is the patrimony of my son ! it is my new country . . . do not ravage it ! ’ ?

“But no ! She was dumb — always, always dumb ! . . .”

With pride and confidence Napoleon opened the *corps législatif* in January. He never dreamed that Franz would abandon his daughter ; the people round Marie Louise told her that the Emperor was invincible. So she shared his illusions and was calm and happy. To her father she wrote :

“The Emperor begs me to say many nice things to you ; he is very fond of you ; not a day passes but he tells me how much he likes you, especially since he saw you at Dresden. . . . The Emperor begs me to assure you of his friendship and to repeat it to you often. . . . You will already have read in the papers of the patriotic gifts of the French to their sovereign. The nation shows him the most complete devotion ; their affection moves

one to tears. . . . The Emperor is very well indeed, very cheerful, in spite of his heavy and serious responsibilities. They say he has already in hand an enormous number of troops. More start daily. It is really touching to see the patriotism, the military ardour of the nation. . . . They are, they say, magnificent. The Emperor is well satisfied, and flatters himself that he will soon force his enemies to a lasting peace."

Early in March the Emperor and Empress went together to inspect the Invalides. The veterans were drawn up in the courtyard, where Napoleon chatted to them and decorated them, and then went into the church, with the Empress, where a *Te Deum* was sung. Afterwards they both visited the refectory, the bakery, the hospital, where four centenarians who had fought at Fontenoy were presented to them. By such kindly acts did Napoleon endear himself and Marie Louise to his army.

They next went for a fortnight's quiet to Trianon, with a small Court and Queen Hortense and the Queen of Westphalia, who had been driven from her kingdom. Marie Louise, who fancied that she again had expectations—"I do not care to dance any more"—went to bed at nine. She liked being alone with the Emperor, riding with him early to Mousseux and lunching *tête-à-tête* at the Pavillon Bagatelle. He had had a fall, and there was no more hunting. The palace at the Trianon was quiet and dull, but she enjoyed that time, reading many novels, but "the heroines were not to be too *galante*." The frivolous little books she sent back, and enjoyed those on history, music, literature, and biography.

A secret treaty had been signed in February between Prussia and Austria, but France was kept in the dark until March 17. On April 1 began the War of Liberation.

"Never," said Metternich to Comte Otto, "had the Kaiser Franz found himself in such an anxious position. He was quite ill."

But Napoleon would not see how matters stood ; he set too great store by his marriage. But, while Franz and Napoleon were still on very affectionate terms, Metternich was twisting his facile master from an ally to a mediator, and the rupture was approaching.

In order to accentuate the bonds between himself and his father-in-law, Napoleon imagined one of those great spectacular effects on which he set so much store. Josephine had been crowned, with great pomp ; but the Emperor of Austria's daughter had not been. However, it was not too late. Marie Louise should have a grand coronation, and not Marie Louise only, but her son, thereby accentuating the usurpation of the Pope's territories and capital. March 7 was fixed for this grand double event. But thus far and no further came Marie Louise ever to be crowned.

The Comte de Narbonne was sent to Vienna to supplement Otto and to sound the Kaiser. He found Franz friendly, and happy over Marie Louise, but he would not commit himself to actively helping France. Narbonne was also received by the arch-enemy, the intriguing Empress ; but she only chatted with him pleasantly, though very guardedly—delighted Napoleon had returned from Russia in good health ; inquiring after the King of Rome ; and, then, suddenly—her health was as bad as ever—she felt faint, and had to retire. Though cordial, Metternich openly told Narbonne that Napoleon, if he wished for peace, must retire behind his old frontiers and give up the Confederation of the Rhine. In reality, it was only the fear of the liberal and revolutionary ideas that were fermenting in Northern Germany that caused Austria to hang back from joining

her. Narbonne grasped the situation, and on his return to Paris told Napoleon that Austria was "in" with the enemy.

The moment had come for Napoleon once more to place himself at the head of his army. But this time, remembering Malet's conspiracy, he had an uneasy feeling which prompted him to leave a fixed government behind him in France. But who was to handle the reins? With not one of his very inferior brothers was Napoleon on good terms. Joseph had proved himself a broken reed in Spain; with Louis, exiled in Styria, he had quarrelled; Lucien was a prisoner in England, and Jérôme had enough to do to maintain himself in his Westphalian dominions. The only choice possible was of Marie Louise, the mother of the heir, to be Regent. True that she was very young, inexperienced, unsophisticated in politics or affairs, and that he himself had kept her religiously in the dark. Josephine, though she would have been less respected, would have made a better stateswoman. Yet Marie Louise was well suited for a figure-head, backed up by a council Napoleon could rely on, and his choice was not unpopular. The Duc de Rovigo says there was great satisfaction on Marie Louise being appointed Regent. "We knew that she was kind and sympathetic, and much beloved and esteemed. Nothing but good had been heard in the reports of her private life, and she had indeed won the esteem of the nation, which was very well disposed towards her. It came from the fact that on every occasion on which she had to make an appearance she never showed anything but what the most rigorous propriety demanded. By evincing much consideration for the public she had won its favour more surely than could have been done by the employment of merely official methods. To help her in the work which the Regency would entail the

Emperor was going to attach to her service the man in whose honesty he had the most confidence, his own private secretary, the Baron de Ménéval. He made this sacrifice, and told Ménéval to write to him daily."

On March 30 a Privy Council was held, at which the Empress, the Queen of Spain, and the Queen Hortense were present. After the reading of the decree appointing her Regent, Marie Louise swore to carry out her duties "as good wife, good mother, and good Frenchwoman, according to the laws and constitution of the Empire, and to relinquish her powers as soon as the Emperor desired it." Immediately after the ceremony she despatched a courier to her father with a letter, saying, "You can be sure how very flattered I am by this new proof of the Emperor's confidence." The next day she was present at a Council of Ministers, and showed intelligence, was attentive, and took it seriously. When the police reports were about to be read Napoleon checked the Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès, saying: "One must not soil a young woman's mind by certain details."

The order of routine of the Regency was signed at St. Cloud the evening before Napoleon's departure. It ran:

"The Empress will preside at the Senate, the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, the Privy Council, and the Extraordinary Councils, which will be convened in cases in which the Emperor considers them necessary, when urgent circumstances demand prompt measures, and do not permit of our decision being awaited. She will examine into the right of pardon, the commutation of sentences, the granting of reprieves or delays in the execution of arrests, and of sentences of condemnation. She can sign decrees of nominations, which will be of secondary order, or when urgent circumstances demand

it. In affairs of secondary order are to be understood, for the War Department, second lieutenancies, or captaincies; in the Navy Department, commissions of officers ranking as lieutenants inclusive; and in Judiciary and Administrative Departments those of the functionaries whom we do not nominate ourselves. Should the Empress-Regent not deem it suitable to preside at the Senate she will be replaced by our cousin the Arch-Chancellor in virtue of the general delegation which we make to him by this present decree, which delegation will also confer upon him the right of presiding when the Empress-Regent does not herself preside at the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, and the Privy Council."

It was further decided that the Regent should every month, or oftener, if necessary, hold diplomatic receptions, at which, however, foreign affairs were not to be discussed, and she was to receive daily reports from the Prince of Lodi, Chancellor of the kingdom of Italy. Cambacérès, as First Councillor of the Regency, and the Duc de Rovigo, Minister of Police, were to send daily reports to the Emperor, who furthermore arranged to write to the Empress letters that were to be official, tracing out what she had to do, and giving minutes about it.

And who was this Cambacérès on whom the Empress-Regent was to lean, and who was to be the real head of the government?

Of a poor but old legal family in Languedoc, Cambacérès was elected to the National Convention in 1792. Though clever and eloquent enough to take the lead in any party, he soon found it was safest to be a favourite with all and odious to none, and became invertebrate, supple, and cringing. One of the judges of Louis XVI. (to whom his family were indebted for

a pension !) he, at first, hedged as to the sentence no less than three times ; then, finally, to appease the bloody Robespierre party, he rushed to the tribune, and proposed the execution of the death-sentence within twenty-four hours, and when Louis asked for three days' grace to prepare for death, moved the refusal.

By trimming assiduously with the most violent leaders Cambacérès kept his head on his shoulders. With Danton he established the infamous Revolutionary Tribunal, which sent thousands of untried innocents to the guillotine. Emerging unscathed from the downfall of Robespierre, as Minister of Justice in 1799, he held cautiously aloof from the rise of Bonaparte. But the latter marked him as a subservient tool, and made him Second Consul. A caricature of the moment, however, shows what a creature Cambacérès was in Napoleon's hands, for it represents him and Lebrun, the Third Consul, kneeling beside Bonaparte, who plants an immense extinguisher over their heads. Cambacérès' share in the Consulate seems to have been chiefly confined to the giving of Lucullian banquets, Napoleon making an exemption in his favour of his order against the posts carrying foreign delicacies, as well as letters. Hence the *mot*, "Bonaparte gives hasty dinners, Cambacérès good dinners, Lebrun no dinners at all."

To do Cambacérès justice, one must mention that he strenuously opposed the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, eliciting the sarcastic remark of his master : "Methinks you're become mightily sparing of shedding Bourbon blood." Napoleon was wont to twit Cambacérès, pulling gently his ear, about his regicidal past : "My poor friend, I can do nothing for you. If ever the Bourbons come back, they are sure to hang you!"

Cambacérès was the first to propose conferring the title of Emperor upon Bonaparte. In return he was

made Arch-Chancellor and Prince of Parma. "Your title is about to be changed, but your functions and my confidence remain the same. In the high dignity with which you are about to be invested you will manifest, as you have done in that of consul, the wisdom of your counsels and the distinguished talents which give you such an important share in all the good I may have done."

The Duchesse d' Abrantès tells a story of the Empress-Regent and her First Councillor, which, however, is probably but *ben trovato*. For Marie Louise, as we have seen, spoke French from early childhood, though, indeed, at the punctilious Court of Vienna she may not have become acquainted with such colloquialisms as those of which her Corsican made use either when annoyed or in good spirits.

"Speaking one day of her father with the Emperor, the latter, who was very angry with him, answered her with some temper. Marie Louise was astonished at being rebuffed by Napoleon, who had never spoken to her but affectionately. She insisted, and wished to continue talking about her father to Napoleon. As the latter was in an extremely irritable mood, he left the room, slamming the door violently behind him and exclaiming to the Empress : 'Your father—your father is a *ganache*' [a stupid old blockhead].

"The epithet *ganache* is not imperial, it is neither noble nor is it even very well-bred, I admit ; but it is very significant, and expresses admirably—what? *Voyons, ma foi!* how shall I find an equivalent? . . . Well, it is the exact opposite of a clever man. . . . The Empress, whose *grande-maitresse* had not brought her up to know what such words might mean, did not understand at all. So she went repeating the word *ganache* lest she should forget it.

"And still she repeated *ganache*, till she found Madame de Montebello.

"*'Mon Dieu! my dear Duchesse,'* she said directly she saw her, 'explain to me what a word means which the Emperor has just used to me in speaking of the Emperor my father; he called him a *ganache*!'

"The Duchesse de Montebello was very embarrassed. If the Empress had said to her, like any other woman, 'my father'; but this solemn expression, 'the Emperor, my father,' checked the Duchesse in her reply, and the explanation did not appear easy to her. However, fearing lest some one else, more bold, should translate the epithet coarsely, she replied to the Empress in her soft voice: 'Madame, it means a good, worthy man.'

"That is odd!" said Marie Louise, 'for the Emperor looked very angry when he used that word.' And she soon thought no more about it, only the word *ganache* had placed opposite to it in the tablets of her memory the word 'worthy man.'

"Some time afterwards the Empress was appointed Regent, with a Council presided over by the Prince Arch-Chancellor, who was to be her mentor. Wishing one day to say a civil thing to him as he sat majestically beside her, 'Monsieur the Arch-Chancellor,' she said to him, smiling, with all the charm she could at that moment conjure to her mouth, 'I am very glad that the Emperor has given me such a sound judge as him whom I am to consult. But I am particularly glad,' she added, reserving all her fascination for a personal compliment upon the choice of the President, 'and I hope that, assisted by such a worthy *ganache* as yourself, I shall do nothing which might displease the Emperor.'

"Who was astonished? The Arch-Chancellor, I hope. He looked at his august sovereign with a surprise mingled with an almost interrogative expression, and which meant

to say : ‘Oh ! ça ! Vous vous moquez de moi ?’ But alas ! the Imperial mouth did not even think of such a thing.

“However, I do not vouch for the truth of this story. I only know that it was all over Paris at this time.”

Thus it was that Napoleon gave to Marie Louise, as her right hand and adviser during his absence, the very man who had taken the foremost and most virulent part in the murder of her father’s aunt.

Napoleon’s sin found him out. His method of working with supple and subservient tools failed him. In due time, when firm and straightforward counsels at the critical moment of the second Regency might have prevented the *débâcle*, he found in Cambacérès but a feeble reed, which, when he leaned on it, pierced his hand.

Considerate as ever to Marie Louise and mindful of the chances of war, Napoleon, before his departure, arranged her status should she be left a widow. The Senate fixed her jointure at £160,000, secured partly on the State and partly on Crown property. It included Compiègne and its forest, the forests of Laigles, of Villars-Cotterets, of Eu, of Aumale, the château of Eu, the forest of Soignes, and £80,000 income from the State Treasury. For her life in widowhood, Marie Louise was to enjoy the Elysées and the Trianons.

Just before Napoleon’s departure Schwarzenberg appeared on the scene, come to spy out the land. The awe of the Corsican ogre still lay over Austria, and Schwarzenberg dare not admit that she would draw the sword against him. Nor did he disturb Marie Louise’s serenity and trust in her father’s alliance, or, at least, neutrality.

But while he was aware through Narbonne how little

reliance could be placed upon Austria, Napoleon made up to Schwarzenberg, and pretended to believe that it would adhere to the treaty of the year before, and wished to imbue his wife and his ministers with a confidence he did not feel himself.

He left St. Cloud for the army at ten o'clock in the morning of April 15.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE FIRST REGENCY*

A FEW hours after Napoleon's departure, the Empress's new secretary, her husband's devoted servant, received this rather forlorn and pathetic little note.

" You are, of course, aware that the Emperor has left. I like to think that you, also, are very grieved. I beg of you if M. de Fain " (who had replaced Ménéval as private secretary with Napoleon) " has not gone, to tell him that I wish very much that he should send me news of the Emperor. I have not found a moment to tell him so myself. I beg you will also send me a list of the *entrées*, the Emperor having wished them to be sent during to-day. I beg you to believe all the assurances of the feelings with which I am your very attached  
" LOUISE."

The next day Schwarzenberg, coming to pay his adieux, found the Empress sad and preoccupied. The Prince was an old friend of the Austrian Imperial family, who had known her all her life, and, finding her quite in the dark as to the critical state of affairs between France and Austria, proceeded to open her eyes a little. He was more candid with Marie Louise than he had been with Napoleon, and she wept bitterly at the possibility of a rupture between her husband and her father.

To Bassano Schwarzenberg was almost brutally frank : "Politics," he blurted, "made this match, politics may unmake it."

Two days later, at St. Cloud, the Regent held a grand reception of the Court and diplomatic world.

Marie Louise, who now, of course, read the despatches, was very anxious about the state of affairs. She had a conversation with Count Floret—the same who had dropped so opportune a hint when her marriage was being thought of in Paris, and who had now taken over the Austrian Embassy on the departure of Schwarzenberg.

"I am assured," she said to him, "that Austria wishes to declare war on France."

Floret tried to look truthful when he begged her not to be alarmed.

"But I hear it discussed daily. The Emperor is very much concerned about it, not only on account of me, but also on account of the friendship he bears to my father, since he saw him at Dresden. You can imagine, therefore, how unhappy the situation makes me. I think that at Vienna they are mistaken as to my husband's real strength. In a little while his army will be even larger. I know this because they show me the list of the officers, and the muster-rolls of the troops. The French are showing an unparalleled energy. If my father declared war against France, incalculable misfortune might happen to him. Write to Vienna. My father will believe you more than he believes me."

Floret tried to reassure her, and she felt calmer, and talked to him of Napoleon's kindness to her, of his domestic virtues—a model husband.

She wrote to her father of her fears. "The Emperor has said to me, 'The Prince I am most attached to is your father. I am sure that if he allows himself to be led by his wife, he will lose my friendship.'"

At the victory of Lützen, May 2, Marie Louise felt "une grande joie," because she hoped it would steady the feeling in the country, which she suspected of being shaky.

"France," writes Rovigo, "soon recovers from a great extremity. Before Lützen all was given up for lost; after it people thought only of a glorious peace. By Napoleon's orders, transmitted through the Regent, Te Deums were sung everywhere. The Empress-Regent heard one at Notre Dame, accompanied by her Court, escorted by her guards, and welcomed by the public with a delirious enthusiasm when she entered Notre Dame, the cheers making the roof of the sacred edifice ring."

The Empress arrived in the coronation coach. Notre-Dame had been decorated with chandeliers and tapestries, and a throne was erected in the choir. Cardinal Maury, whilom orator of the National Assembly, the rival of Mirabeau, doubtless officially inspired, gave an adulatory address in honour of a human being, the like of which has not often been heard in a house of God.

"Madame,—The presence of your Imperial and Royal Majesty in this sanctuary proclaims to your people the new and brilliant victories with which Almighty God has just crowned the ever-victorious arms of your august spouse. If all the French are filled with joy to have to-day to return thanks to God for so much glory, what must be the happiness of a heart called upon to share the throne! Religion will be enhanced in its prayers by all the worth which your prayers add to them, at the moment which your piety has chosen for it to be the organ for your thanksgiving to the King of kings." He went on to allude to the approaching coronation to be performed at the end of the war. "This same temple, where the whole Empire has just raised, even to Heaven, the pious transports of its gratitude, shall soon be reopened to

celebrate in your honour another historical solemnity, as dear to the sovereign as to his subjects. We shall then there behold, in the midst of universal acclamations, the august heroine of this national fête, fitly placed before our altar beside the hero and the restorer of the throne of Charlemagne. Happy to sanctify such a day, religion will congratulate herself in thus proclaiming your glory, resplendent of your happiness and of the public joy. But we shall hasten to request Your Majesty, in the name of this holy and necessary religion, that she will always look upon the greatest of your benefits, the publicity given to your religious principles and the protection of your example."

When the speech was over, the Cardinal marched before the Empress, who passed into the choir beneath a canopy borne by canons, and who was preceded by ushers, heralds, pages, aides-de-camp, masters of the ceremonies, officers on duty, the holders of the decoration of the Great Eagles, the grand master of the ceremonies, the grand chamberlain, and other grand dignitaries, and followed by her households, French and Italian, *dames d'honneur*, *chevaliers d'honneur*, chaplains, and her grand marshal. She knelt at the altar, and then, seating herself on the throne, heard the Te Deum, returning to the Tuilleries in the same state as that in which she came.

Next day the *Moniteur*, which was always inspired, was all enthusiasm on her reception, adding, to please the trend of public feeling, that the Emperor had called a congress at Prague, in accordance with the wishes of Austria, to arrange peace.

It was Marie Louise's first public appearance as Regent, and a truly magnificent one. The revulsion of feeling must have been great, and very cheering, for immediately upon her return from the cathedral she wrote to her father : "I have come back quite touched from seeing

the affection with which the Emperor inspires the nation. Never have the French so cheered his name. He is both conqueror and peacemaker."

Napoleon, who had been in the thick of the fight, wrote to announce his victory of Lützen to the Kaiser, adding : " I have news of the Empress, with whom I am extremely satisfied. She is to-day my chief minister, and acquits herself to my great satisfaction. I cannot let you be ignorant of this, knowing how it will please your paternal heart."

To Cambacérès, he wrote, praising his young recruits, and adding : " Nothing can go better ! "

The fate of Europe lay in Austria's hand. Should she continue the alliance or not ? Napoleon wrote from Dresden after Lützen begging the Kaiser to second him in his wish for peace. Franz sent a congratulatory but evasive reply : " What you tell me of the Empress gives me much pleasure. In giving Your Majesty my daughter I was certain of giving him an excellent wife, endowed with every quality which could promote domestic happiness. The development of talents which will render her capable of governing the Empire is due, no doubt, to the wise lessons and example of Your Majesty. I wish most sincerely that my daughter may contribute constantly to your happiness, *M. mon frère*, to which I attach an essential part of mine." Not a word about peace !

Napoleon wrote again, imploring Franz to consider his honour, saying that he had decided to die at the head of his French *braves* rather than to live to be the scorn of the English. He begged that the fruit of three years' friendship might not be destroyed, and that Franz would not sacrifice the interests of his subjects, the happiness of the generation, and " that of a part of his family so sincerely devoted to him."

But Napoleon did not grasp that Franz really disliked him even more than his traditional enemy Prussia. The latter was only a rebel, but Napoleon was a man of the Revolution. So while Lützen and Bautzen was being fought, the Kaiser, as Napoleon put it, got "behind the Bohemian mountains." "Get me my alliance back," he said to Metternich in his broad Viennese, "and meantime I will get myself fit for the saddle ; but first of all get me my alliance back."

So Metternich, more confident and happy than for a long time, passed in wily fashion from ally to mediator on the way to the final step of enemy. But the awe of Napoleon's star still dazzled the Kaiser. To those who thought Napoleon in a tight place he remarked : "I'm not worried about him, he'll play them some of his old tricks yet !"

So there was trickery all round, and a deadlock. Metternich suggested terms—the basis being the surrender by Napoleon of all provinces taken since 1809. The latter found Austria too strong to bluff, and Russia declined to negotiate. There was nothing for it but to face Europe alone, and recommence hostilities.

Bautzen was fought and won. Anatole de Montesquiou was sent to the Regent with the news, on which she wrote to her father : "I think I understand that this victory is of great importance. I cannot tell you how happy this good news makes me. I was never so well."

Meanwhile, in the Empress's private circle things were not going smoothly. When Anatole de Montesquiou, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, brought news of the victory of Bautzen to the Empress, it was night-time, and the Comtesse woke her up to hear it. Marie Louise was ill in consequence, and on Sunday morning the guests arriving for the usual reception at St. Cloud after Mass, were turned back by Caffarelli. Napoleon, when he heard

of this, was very annoyed. "The King of Rome," he wrote, "would have received gaily," and he blamed Madame de Montesquiou and Caffarelli. Again he was annoyed because the little King could not attend the Te Deum for the victory with his mother, because there were no horses ordered for his carriage.

At this moment, less anxious, she was popular. Her government was gentle, writes Rovigo. "She often signed pardons, unostentatiously, but the fact was known to those who were near her and loved her. She never sought to fascinate, but was always natural and simple. She received all who wished to come to her, and would never have schemed to attract those who did not. She was still the object of deep respect and admiration." Rovigo mentions that he, as Police Minister, never enhanced her popularity by artificial means.

Madame le Duchesse d'Abrantès throws, as usual, a less kindly light on the Empress-Regent.

"During this time Paris was awaiting news with extreme impatience. Often I wrote to the Arch-Chancellor to ask for any, for with Marie Louise it was not as with kind Josephine, who met our anxiety half-way. The former was all *gourmée*, stiff, and all etiquette, only permitting Madame de Montebello to approach her. I have already said that she was an excellent choice, but perhaps Madame la Duchesse de Montebello should have persuaded the Empress to be more 'popular' amongst us, if I may so put it; in the days of misfortune she would perhaps have found sympathy which she did not awake. How might she have done it? To *déjeuner*, nod her head to her son, ride on horseback, do wool-work, play *tant bien que mal* the piano, gossip right royally over our private concerns: that was how the Empress occupied herself during the Dresden business, when she had just learnt that her husband and her father had broken all the

bonds which united them. . . . How little she was beloved!—she who would have been adored, had she willed it."

At Bautzen Napoleon "had most stupidly lost," as he said, "one of the three men he loved and esteemed most," Marshal Duroc, comptroller of the palaces. The Marshal's last words were that his master was insatiable, and had not learnt his lesson.

Yet on June 4 Napoleon signed an armistice. All Europe was delighted. Both Paris and Vienna believed peace in sight, and Marie Louise wrote hastily to her father :

"I can indeed tell you that never has any news rejoiced me so. It has soothed my cares and fears. I see in it another proof of your kindness. I am quite touched by it, and I cannot be sufficiently grateful to you. I am sure that the Emperor will receive this proof of your friendship with delight. The days I spent with you at Dresden and at Prague are full of sweet memories. It is this same month last year that I had the happiness of seeing you and assuring you verbally of my daughterly affection. I kiss your hands, dear father, and thank you for having sent me a courier every fortnight."

Poor Marie Louise! Napoleon had not granted the truce to prepare for peace, but for war. To the Viceroy of Italy he had written : "I shall grant a truce because Austria is arming, and in order to gain time to bring up the army of Italy to Laibach and threaten Vienna." Duroc's dying words were true!

Count Bubna was sent to Napoleon at Prague with conditions of peace too hard for him to accept, involving as they did the loss of the German Protectorate, the Duchy of Warsaw, the Illyrian provinces.

"Do you wish to dishonour me?" cried the Emperor to Bubna. "Honour before everything—then the wife,

then the child, then the dynasty ! ” He vowed the world would be upset, and great misfortunes ensue. “ The best of women will be the victim of them. France will be handed over to the Jacobins. What will become of the child in whose veins flows Austrian blood ? I esteem my father-in-law, and I know him. He arranged this marriage with me in the most noble manner. I am heartily grateful to him. But, if the Emperor of Austria wishes to change his policy, he had better not have made this match, which, at this moment, I must be sorry for. I told you in Paris, and I told Schwarzenberg, that nothing is so repugnant to me as to make war on Austria. I do not wish to make Austrian blood hated in France. The long wars between Austria and France have borne a crop of resentment. You know that the Empress, as an Austrian Princess, was not liked when she arrived in France. She is beginning to win public opinion by her amiability, and you wish to force me to issue manifestoes which will irritate the nation. Indeed, I am not to be accused of having too loving a heart ; but, if I love anything in the world, it is my wife. Whatever may be the result of this war, it will affect the future of the King of Rome. On that account war with Austria is hateful to me. . . . You call yourself my ally, and you wish to remove your contingent.” He added that if his conquests were taken from him, “ blood must flow.”

At Whitsuntide Marie Louise, now in better health and spirits, had a little two days’ outing in the country. By Napoleon’s wish, she went to stay at Mortefontaine with the amiable Queen of Spain, whose husband’s subjects, with the assistance of Wellington, were rapidly driving him out of his kingdom. Napoleon had written to Comtesse de Montesquiou, on June 7 : “ I see with pleasure that my son grows, and gives fair promise.” He wished the Empress to have some amusement, as was

natural for her age, and wrote anxiously about her health. But Marie Louise took her part as Regent seriously and sadly. However, there were theatricals at Mortefontaine, by the Vaudeville actors, and the sisters-in-law made an excursion to Ennerville.

Though the abortive congress began to sit at Prague, on June 27, by a secret treaty, Austria joined the Allies. But in Paris and Vienna hopes of peace ran high. Marie Louise was living in a fool's paradise. "I can give you again better news of my husband," she wrote to her father. "All my prayers are for the prompt conclusion of peace. The armistice has already done my health good. You know how much the anxiety affected it."

Napoleon returned to Dresden, making a great show, the *Comédie française* company acting, dinners, levées—bluffing in fact. "It is good people think we amuse ourselves here!"

Then came that momentous interview with Metternich, which lasted six hours, till dusk fell, and the servants, fearful of disturbing them, not bringing in candles, it ended in the dark. Metternich came wishful for peace. He found the Emperor in one of his most irritable moods. Napoleon bewailed his folly in marrying an Austrian Archduchess; the Emperor Francis wished him back behind the Alps, the Rhine, the Pyrenees, which meant a shrunken throne for his daughter and grandson. Metternich, imperturbable, agreed.

"So the Emperor Francis wishes to dethrone his daughter?"

"The Emperor of Austria," replied the minister, "is first of all a sovereign, and, whatever fate may have in store for his daughter, his people's interests will take the first place in his plans."

Metternich's *sang froid* upset Napoleon.

"And so it is my father-in-law who harbours such

a project? It is he who sends you? In what sort of a position does he think to place me with the French? Does he think a mutilated throne can be a safe seat in France for his daughter and grandson?" Then he blurted out: "And how much did England give you to play this part against me?"

Metternich was silent.

"You will not declare war against me?"

"You are lost, sire," were Metternich's last words.

Napoleon had dropped his hat as he tramped irritably to and fro. Metternich would not pick it up. Napoleon himself did so, and left the room. Outside, Bausset, the *préfet* of the palace, was in waiting, and thought he looked sad and heated. He grasped Bausset's hand.

Directly Metternich had left the Marcolini palace he instantly sent off a courier to ask Schwarzenberg how long a prolongation of the armistice he needed to reinforce the army.

The armistice was to continue till midnight, August 17; not an hour longer, said Metternich. Napoleon simply did not believe him. He shilly-shallied, the congress dragged on. Then Napoleon bluffed again.

This time he again made use of Marie Louise. Suddenly ordered her to join him at Mainz for a few days. To do him justice, the move was not entirely political. There is no doubt that at that time they were sincerely attached to each other, and they had been separated for some months. But Napoleon's ulterior motive was to accentuate his family relationship with Austria, and also to treat his father-in-law to the spectacle of a little domestic idyll; for, personally, Franz was tender-hearted, and nothing if not a devoted husband, four times over.

It was so in keeping with Marie Louise's loyal feelings of friendship that, in the hurry of starting for Mainz, she should find a moment to write to her friend Victoire,

to consent to stand godmother to the latter's second son. But the letter is more stiff than any of that long correspondence which covers so many years. It begins : "À Madame la Comtesse de Crenneville," instead of to "Chère amie." It ends "Votre affectionnée amie" instead of "Votre attachée amie." Probably Marie Louise, in her new position as Regent thought that it behoved her to be more punctilious even with her old childhood's friend.

With his wonderful power of attention to details, Napoleon had arranged every item of her journey. Marie Louise only received her orders on the 20th ; she was ready to start on the night of the 22nd. "I am sure you will share my joy," she wrote to Madame de Luçay. Once again hurrying across Europe to meet Napoleon, travelling night and day, Marie Louise, taking with her the Duchesse, Beauharnais, two other ladies, three gentlemen, and Ménéval, reached Mainz at four in the evening on July 26, in pouring weather. "I hasten, madame," she writes to her *dame d'atours*, to give you news of my arrival. . . . I have not seen the Emperor yet. We expect him every moment, and no one awaits him with more impatience than I do. I believe he will come to-night, or at latest to-morrow morning. I beg you to tell one of my first women to send me the rest of the *cervelas* in chocolate which have been left behind in a cupboard at St. Cloud. I beg you to send the book if it appears interesting. I am very tired with the journey, and with the roads, which we found so bad that I only reached Mainz at five in the evening with a headache and a bad cold. The weather has been terrible ; it has never ceased raining. I must finish my letter because I cannot keep my eyes open ; for four days I have not slept ten hours in all."

Only at midnight did the Emperor arrive, to find her sound asleep. She thought him looking well and

bronzed and in the most confident spirits. They put up at the Schloss of the Teutonic Order, on the bank of the Rhine, and were joined by the Grand-duke and Duchess of Baden, the pleasant Prince Primate of Nassau. Next day Napoleon reviewed the troops passing through to join the army, and gave a banquet. To this were invited the governor of Berg, Count Beugnot, and Jean Bon St. André, *préfet* of Mainz, an old Republican, a colleague of Robespierre's on the National Convention. He came to the dinner dressed half in uniform and half in black clothes and a cravat. He found Napoleon monosyllabic; the Empress timidly putting in a few words. After dinner the Prince of Nassau offered the Emperor a boat and he went out for a row on the Rhine. With him went the governor and the *préfet*, some of the suite, and his mameluke Rustom. Napoleon, his spy-glass to his eye, leant over the gunwale of the boat, looking at the view of Biebrich opposite, and the vine-clad hills of the Rhine.

In a whisper behind his back the old republican remarked to Count Beugnot that the fate of the world hung on a kick!

"For God's sake, be silent!" whispered back the governor. "Do not be alarmed," replied Jean Bon, "people of resolution are rare!"

When they were safely back on land again, the governor told the *préfet* what a fright he had given him, but Jean Bon prophesied that floods of bloody tears would flow because that day had not been Napoleon's last.

Yet never had Napoleon seemed more formidable, and all over the Empire was peace. No longer dreading any rupture between father and husband, believing in the Congress, Marie Louise enjoyed herself amazingly in the sunny Rhineland in lovely July weather. Daily she drove about the neighbourhood and saw the sights. Remembering that Napoleon's fête-day was drawing near, she wrote

to order Isabey to paint a miniature of herself and the King of Rome on a snuff-box that she might send it as a present to the Emperor. He was "to arrange the group as he liked, my son on my knees."

But the happy little holiday only lasted six days. Napoleon kissed her before all the Court as he put her into her carriage, and Marie Louise wept at the parting.

The Emperor returned to Dresden. For the Empress he had arranged, in a yacht belonging to the Prince of Nassau, a pleasant trip down the Rhine. The scenery delighted her. The first evening she wrote to the Emperor that she had landed and visited a mediæval castle, half ruined, the *stammschloss* of the Metternichs. The next day she was welcomed at Coblenz by bells and guns and trumpets, her impressionable nature quite touched. There she left the yacht and went by post-chaise to Aix la Chapelle, where she visited the cathedral. Thence by Liége, Namur, Soissons—with all its memories of the coming as a bride to Compiègne—and there her boy, "lively, laughing, chattering," was awaiting her as she gets out of the carriage, eager to show her his little gilt chair drawn by the tame white sheep. His mother brought him back toys from Mainz—an elephant, a box of eight comic figures, four games, animated toys, ducks, a hobby-horse, a doll in a bath. She waited and watched him fish for the ducks. She had had his rocking-horse done up for £13. To Napoleon she sent a picture of him by Isabey, praying, with a toy on the ground.

The sands of the armistice were running out. The Allies now offered Austria sinews of war to join them, her finances being, as usual, in a bad way. Napoleon did not realize Metternich's underhand working, and would not make up his mind either to agree to or refuse the conditions offered.

Once more back again alone at St. Cloud, Marie

Louise became depressed. Napoleon seemed obdurate, and the vision of peace was fleeting fast. "I am in a painful uncertainty as to the result of the negotiations," she wrote to her father. "God grant there may not be war. This thought frightens me horribly. If war does break out may you not be mixed up with it. I found the Emperor very well at Mainz ; he has grown much fatter. Unfortunately, I was only with him six days. I found my son very well and very gay. He talks already, and he is very sweet. I shall not stay with him very long. The Emperor sends me to Cherbourg to open the dock."

The crisis was fast approaching. The congress met only for form ; for everything had to be referred to Napoleon by his delegates, Caulaincourt and Narbonne. "I send you with more powers than power," the Foreign Minister had told them when they went to it. "You will have your hands tied, but your legs and mouth free to walk and dine." Napoleon declined any concessions, and tried to divide the Allies. He would not believe that the armistice would not be prolonged. Yet the Kaiser himself dictated to Metternich : "I expect 'Yes' or 'No' during the day of the 10th. I have decided to declare war during the day of the 11th, as will also Prussia and Russia, when the congress is dissolved . . . the fate of war to decide the future."

Caulaincourt was sent with the ultimatum. Warsaw, Northern Germany, the Hanseatic Free Towns, the Illyrian provinces, the Protectorate of the Rhine Confederation—all were to go. Napoleon had twenty-four hours to make up his mind. He refused to believe that the date was irrevocable, and sent up arrogant counter proposals on the night of the 10th.

On August 10 the Fête-Napoléon was kept by the French army all over Germany with much enthusiasm.

While the French army was feasting, the Russian army invaded Bohemia. Caulaincourt wrote imploringly to his master. Napoleon, touched by his faithful friend's appeal, gave way. It was five days too late. Austria said she must now consult her allies. On the 15th she declared war.

Years later, at St. Helena, Napoleon thus wrote bitterly : "I do not hesitate to say that my assassination at Schönbrunn would have been less fatal to France than has been my union with Austria. . . . I loved Marie Louise well ; she did not mix herself up with intrigues. My marriage with her ruined me, because it is not in my nature to be able to believe in the treachery of my relatives, and the day of my marriage with Marie Louise her father became, according to my bourgeois customs, a member of my family. It has been necessary for me to have more than evidence to believe that the Emperor of Austria would turn his arms against me, and would dethrone, in the interests of the Bourbons, his daughter and grandson. Without this confidence I should not have gone to Moscow ; I should have signed peace at Châtillon. . . . The abyss covered with flowers ruined me."

On the same day that the Czar crossed the frontiers of the Empire the Empress-Regent celebrated the Fête-Napoléon with great pomp at the Tuileries, receiving all the dignitaries of the State, including the Princes of the Rhine Confederation. There was a Te Deum in the palace chapel, an opera, *Dido*, in the palace theatre, and then she appeared on the balcony of the Salle des Maréchaux amid much cheering. In ignorance of what was happening on the banks of the Elbe, Marie Louise, on the banks of the Seine, listened to the concert and watched the fireworks in the Place de la Concorde, returning to St. Cloud to sleep. In common with all Paris, she imagined peace at hand.

Daily she and Napoleon corresponded, couriers doing the journey in less than a hundred hours. But Napoleon's orders were that she was to be kept in the dark about her father's "infamous treachery" till she returned from Cherbourg. The Empress was ill with a sore throat before leaving for Cherbourg, and sent an affectionate but rather stiff letter, dictated, to both the Comtesses Colloredo and Crenneville, with presents and a portrait of herself, that she might "be always in the midst of a family which has so many claims on my affection."

The departure of the Empress was postponed on account of Napoleon's fête on August 15. This was not altogether a success. Napoleon was annoyed because, after the reception and the Te Deum and Mass, she was late in arriving at the opera for *Didon* and would not leave till it was finished ; therefore "the people waited two hours for the fireworks" and "showed impatience at not seeing her appear." The Comtesse de Montesquiou and the first chamberlain were blamed for this. There was quarrelling between the former and the Duchesse, who put the blame on the Empress, and made her unpopular. The truth of the matter was that Marie Louise was not very well, suffering from a cough and rheumatism, and had grown very thin. She was languid, inert, and had certainly lost ground in public favour. Napoleon and this new war were also unpopular.

The Duke de Rovigo, head of the police, was very uneasy before the visit to Cherbourg. He tried to induce General Caffarelli, the chamberlain, to make her popular, to suggest her speaking to the right people, and to avoid "these absurd unpunctualities." The country she was about to visit had bad times last year : there were riots over the famine, mills were pillaged, the *maires* assaulted, eight people were hanged—four men and four women. The aristocracy had paid visits to the prisoners. Rumours

were spread that the Emperor had been wounded after Lützen and marshals killed. All the west was royalist. There had been a plot in the previous autumn among the guard of honour. The Emperor had ordered the people of Brittany to be stirred. But civil war was simmering, and what if they captured the Empress? So she was to go no farther than Normandy. Nothing was to be allowed that would show that public opinion was veering against the Empire. Madame Dufresnay, a protégée of the chamberlain De Ségur, was sent ahead "to make a good press" for her and to arrange about charities and presents. But Marie Louise must play her part.

"Doubtless," writes Rovigo, "the Empress, esteemed by all the nation, will be even more interesting to it in the position in which she finds herself. Doubtless she daily wins fresh hearts, and there is no fear that the approaching circumstances may in any way injure the homage she has won. It is necessary, no doubt, to ward off from Her Majesty's mind any idea that would tend to give her a contrary opinion; it would be even dangerous if such were allowed to take possession of her. . . . The Empress must always wear that gracious smile on her lips which enhances her welcome in such a forthcoming manner to persons she deigns to converse with. Get hold," says Rovigo to his old comrade Caffarelli, "of many pleasing anecdotes about the people who will have the honour of being presented, that she may say a kind word which will be retailed by a hundred different mouths and reported in the same way in as many letters. . . . Try that the Empress is punctual. . . . 'Punctuality is the politeness of kings,' said a celebrated courtier, and it is true. So, for God's sake, *mon ami*, none of these everlasting waitings, which chill down enthusiasm and give an opening to evil tongues. . . .



*By Bosio.*

MARIE LOUISE, EMPRESS OF THE FRENCH.



This trip may result in great good or in great luke-warmness, which, under the circumstances, would be a disaster. The Empress may take courage. Already she is reverenced, and will receive a hundredfold in return for the slightest kind welcomes, which she knows how to bestow if left to herself. It seems to me that if I had the honour of being attached to her I should be bold enough to tell her so, certain that one cannot displease her in telling her of all the desires of this nation to love her and to be beloved ; but, for God's sake, *mon ami*, no *chilliness*—you understand. We have often told each other that there were no brains in that head, no warmth in that heart, but our sovereign has enough of both to carry out our wishes."

Marie Louise started a few days late on this momentous journey, because the Duchesse did not like one of the ladies who was in waiting. She took Mesdames de Montebello and Luçay with her and only one *dame du palais* out of thirty-eight. Where the three roads from Paris, Rouen, and Bordeaux to Cherbourg met, there was a triumphal arch. At Caen a fine Norman horse was presented to her, and she witnessed a *fête-champêtre*, with libations of cider and milk, and distributed gifts of watches from Leroy's ; bells were rung, guns fired. On her fête-day, August 25, she reached Cherbourg, sad, with a bad cold on her chest, suffocated with the dust of the journey and weary with the bad roads since Carentan. On her arrival she heard that war had begun.

How sad a fête-day ! What a contrast to the three preceding ones which Napoleon had kept with so much affection and merry-making !

The next day she began the business for which she had been sent, by visiting the new harbour, now to be called the Port Napoléon. The Emperor was using the

Regent to increase his personal popularity, to impress upon the nation the works of public utility he had done for it, and also to divert public attention from an unpopular war.

Fifty young girls in white, headed by the daughter of the *préfet*, threw white roses at the Regent's feet, offering her baskets of locally-made lace, and singing verses in her honour. Escorted by the Minister of Marine, Marie Louise walked into the dock, still dry, to inspect the works. Curiously enough, as at her previous visits, English frigates were cruising in the offing, only about twelve miles off.

Somewhat bored, as always, with these official proceedings, the Empress drove off in the afternoon to Château Martin in the country. The owners were absent, but the gardener, unaware of his visitor's identity, offered a meal of milk and fruit, and received a rouleau of money.

In the evening the Empress had the *préfet* to dine, and amused him at the whist-table by a story of how she one day tried to make an omelette ; that the Emperor suddenly appeared and said that he could make a better ; but, donning an apron, failed ignominiously.

Because of a new moon and an unusually high tide, the 27th had been fixed for the filling of the dock. Holes had been made in the dykes which protected it, and when the Empress came at six in the evening to see the sea flow in, some 40,000 people crowded the shore and the roofs of the town, and guns were fired round the dock. The Bishop of Coutances addressed the Regent, and then blessed the new harbour.

In the afternoon, the Empress drove out to see the Château de Querqueville, which Napoleon meditated buying. She then went to dinner at her usual hour of eight. The dyke which kept back the high tide was

calculated to yield at nine o'clock, and she missed the sight. "The fine moment when the water rushed in with a noise came when every one was dining, and no one saw it, and, as one misfortune always follows another, I missed the fireworks also!"

Yet, in spite of these "everlasting unpunctualities," Marie Louise "pleases everybody much ; she has nothing but agreeable things to say to every one who comes near her. She makes a good impression by her simple manners, and receives from the aristocracy of Lower Normandy most eager attentions. . . . She runs about all over the place without a suite, accompanied only by one of her most intimate ladies."

On the 29th there was a naval ball at the Arsenal, but the Empress, stifled with the heat, only stayed a quarter of an hour ; however, she sent her ladies back to it. Next day there was boating in the roads, lunch on the dyke, while the fleet dressed ships and saluted. In the evening the Empress went to the play, a performance by the Opéra Comique Company. People were delighted that she made three curtseys on entering, as at the Tuilleries theatre, "for it was not expected, and the impression she produced is extraordinary in consequence of the mixture of dignity, of kindness, of virgin grace, which appears in her face and deportment. Next day there was a fishing-party, seynes nets thrown. The Empress drove into the sea in a little pony carriage, and the suite got a footbath." As a memento of this Imperial visit and the new dock, Cherbourg was to be called Napoleonville.

At Rheims, on her return journey, the Empress visited the dye-works of Gonfreville, and was shown a new colour, called in her honour "bleu Marie Louise."

She had the *préfet* and his wife to dine, at which

Napoleon, always careful to shield Marie Louise's innocence, was annoyed, for the lady was a *divorcée*.

On the very day that the tide rushed into the new dock at Cherbourg, the flood of the French army overwhelmed the Allies at the battle of Dresden. Marie Louise heard of the victory as she was leaving Cherbourg, and wrote to Ménéval, who had not accompanied her : " My health would be very good if I had not a bad cold on my chest, which makes me very ill, but I shall not do anything to cure it till I am back in Paris. Besides, the good news I have received to-day will do me more good than any amount of drugs. I hope this great victory will soon bring back the Emperor, and, with him, peace."

But defeats followed, and the Treaty of Töplitz, between Austria, Russia, and Prussia, which rendered the annihilation of Napoleon possible. He was ill from exposure at Dresden. For a week no letter of his reached St. Cloud, and the Empress, who wrote constantly, describing the feelings in Paris and the provinces for peace, grew anxious. At last, very early on the morning of September 11, Ménéval had a note from her : " I send you a letter from the Emperor which arrived yesterday, very late. I think that you will be pleased to read it, because you have shared my uneasiness. When you have taken note of it, I beg you to send it back to me."

Napoleon knew how anxious they were in Paris for news. The same day he had written to Bassano : " They are so impatient for news in Paris that you should not neglect any means of sending it. Soften it as much as possible," and, with his usual thoughtfulness for Marie Louise, he adds, " avoid inserting anything personal against the Emperor and Metternich."

And, indeed, the news required softening. For, while Napoleon spent September manœuvring in Bohemia and

Silesia against Russia and Prussia, Jérôme had to fly from Westphalia before the Cossacks, and Bavaria was dragged into the coalition.

The outbreak of the war had made any communication between the Kaiser and his daughter difficult, if not impossible. She felt it very much. Judge, then, of her delight, towards the end of September, to receive at last a letter from him, which he had enclosed in a note to Napoleon, begging the latter to forward it. She hastened to reply: "It is impossible for me to tell you how pleased I was when, in the Emperor's letter, I found yours. I have been deeply touched by this attention. I was prepared, as long as the war lasted, not to receive any news from you. This silence was hard for me. . . . I pray God every day to put an end to hostilities. I should then be at peace, and no longer have to divide my feelings. The Emperor has promised to send you on my letters punctually. I will write to you as often as possible, for you know, dear father, that it is one of my greatest pleasures. I think a great deal about you, and I am touched that you are satisfied with my conduct. You see, I do my utmost, dear father, to follow the principles which you have inculcated by your example."

Nevertheless, it was nearly two months ere she could send a letter to him again.

Kaiser Franz, to do him justice, was now, to the utmost of his power, working on the Allies on behalf of France, "for the welfare of the country in which my daughter is settled can never be quite indifferent to me." He certainly had at this moment no thought of restoring the Bourbons or of dethroning Marie Louise.

Napoleon had need of a fresh army and further supplies. He wrote ordering the Empress-Regent to attend an extraordinary meeting of the Senate to be called for October 8. It was to be informed of the threatening

forces and of the defection of his ally Bavaria, known in Paris even before he heard of it himself. Coming from her lips the bad news would be softened, his own prestige less damaged.

The Empress-Regent went in state—coronation coach, equerries riding round it, escort of troops, of great officers of State. She was received by twenty-four Senators. After resting in the rooms prepared for her she mounted the throne, which was to the left of the Emperor's, the household behind, the officials in front.

"She spoke," says Rovigo, who heard her, "with a dignity which gave her youth a lustre more brilliant than her birth and rank."

In solemn silence Marie Louise read her speech : "Senators, the principal powers of Europe, disgusted by the pretensions of England, had, last year, joined their armies to ours, to effect the peace of the world and the settlement of the rights of all nations. At the first mischances of war, slumbering passions awoke. England and Russia have dragged Austria and Prussia into their cause. Our enemies wish to destroy our allies in order to punish their fidelity. They desire to carry the war into the heart of our beautiful country in order to revenge themselves over the triumphs which have led our victorious eagles into the midst of their States. I know better than any one what our nation would have to dread if ever it allowed itself to be conquered. Before ascending the throne to which I was called by the choice of my august spouse, and the wish of my father, I had the highest opinion of the courage and energy of this great nation. This opinion has been daily increased by what I have seen passing before my eyes. Associated for the last four years with the most intimate thoughts of my husband, I know with what feelings he would be torn if seated on the throne of a humiliated country.

Frenchmen ! your Emperor, your country, your honour, calls you ! ”

“ She was attentively listened to,” says Rovigo, “ and every one was interested in her, and she left the Senate amid most respectful enthusiasm.” A levy of four hundred thousand men was decreed, and treasure which had lain for sixteen years in the vaults of the Tuilleries was used to recruit it.

Next day the Regent, in the Salle de Mars, gave audience at St. Cloud to the municipal council of Paris, which was full of protestations of devotion. But the day after came the terrific catastrophe of Leipzig.

On Paris the blow fell with overwhelming force. A gleam of brightness to the Regent must have been the address presented to her at St. Cloud by deputations from “ your six good towns ” of the Low Countries and Belgium—Antwerp, grateful for Napoleon’s great naval works there, Brussels and Ghent thankful for assistance in weakness and disunion, and the latter recalling itself to the Empress as the cradle of her ancestor, Charles V.

Another grain of comfort must have been the twenty captured flags sent the day before by Napoleon, with a letter : “ Madame and dearest wife. I send you twenty flags taken by my armies at the battles of Leipzig and Hannau. It is an homage it gives me pleasure to tender to you. I wish that you take it as a mark of my great satisfaction with your conduct during the Regency I entrusted to you.” Napoleon, retreating homewards with all that was left of his armies, wrote from Mainz, where only so lately they had spent such happy days together.

Madame Durand writes that Marie Louise this time dreaded Napoleon’s return ; she was afraid he would love her less on account of her father’s broken faith with him. But never did he love her more.

In the dusk of a November afternoon a shabby post-chaise rattled into the courtyard of St. Cloud. The Empress was in the King of Rome's rooms, playing with her boy, when the cry was raised that the Emperor had returned. Napoleon had come up the stairs ere she met him, followed by the King of Rome, led by the Comtesse de Montesquiou. When she saw him Marie Louise burst into tears.

"Moved and touched, he took her in his arms with a redoubled tenderness. Then the son, brought by the *gouvernante*, came to put the last touch to a family meeting which interested intensely the small number of spectators who saw it."

Napoleon was calm and resigned. Not by a word did he blame Marie Louise, nor did he vouchsafe a syllable as to the fate of the campaign. He only smiled when she said to him, through her tears : "The Emperor, my father, told me, when he placed me on the throne of France, that he would support me there ; and my father is an honest man."

## CHAPTER XV

### *THE LAST FAREWELL*

IN the middle of November Marie Louise received a letter from her father, the first she had had for six weeks. It was brought by the Comte de St. Aignan, who had been made a prisoner. He was now sent to Paris by the Allies bearing negotiations for peace upon the basis of Napoleon's return to his natural frontiers. They thought him sure to refuse, yet the offer might make a good effect upon the French nation, and isolate Napoleon from his people. But on November 15 the Senate, still obsequious, voted thirty thousand recruits ; the *corps législatif*, however, stood out for peace.

Marie Louise replied at once to her father : "God grant that peace may soon be granted to us to resume our regular private correspondence. It would put an end to my anxiety. You cannot imagine how much I am troubled by the thought that you and my husband are enemies, while you each are of such a nature as should make you intimate friends. The Emperor is very well. I think he is fatter and better than when he left for the war. . . . We are going back to town to-day, which does not please me much, for the air of St. Cloud is better than that of Paris."

The Allies hesitated to cross the frontiers ; they were in no hurry to bring back the Bourbons. Napoleon was blind to the royalist plottings, and still obsessed

with his star. He did indeed replace Bassano for Foreign Affairs by Caulaincourt, but when, upon the latter's advice, early in December, Napoleon offered to agree to the Allies' proposals from Frankfurt it was too late, for they had decided to crush him.

Marie Louise was uneasy and unhappy. On the faces of all around her she saw anxiety stamped. For the last time the Fête of Austerlitz and the coronation was celebrated in Paris on December 4—the usual reception, Te Deum, the tragedy of *Ninus II.* at the palace theatre, free performances at the theatres. But this time the city had to be invited to illuminate; previously it had done so spontaneously. Every one was downcast; Marie Louise often found in tears.

The Emperor and Empress now spent a few quiet days at the Trianon for the latter's birthday, of which, however, there was no public celebration. The Trianons were well guarded.

On December 19 Napoleon opened the *corps législatif* with great pomp. The procession crossed the gardens of the Tuileries, the Place and bridge of La Concorde; but when the Emperor left his carriage on the terrace in front of the buildings there was no cheering. The Empress, Queen Hortense, and their suites sat in the tribunes facing the throne. An icy silence reigned in the chambers. The Emperor's speech was sad, but dignified. He spoke of victories, of defections; of his wish for peace, of his enemies' refusal; he appealed to the nation.

Diplomacy was now a thing of the past. It was a question of invasion and the luck of war. The Allies poured over the Rhine. Schwarzenberg, commanding the Austrian forces, somewhat unwillingly and circuitously advanced on France. Austria was still loath to dethrone

Marie Louise ; but, as in 1870, France was prepared only for the offensive, not for the defensive.

On New Year's Day the receptions seemed the same as usual. The great bodies of the State and of the city were ranged in the Throne-room of the Tuileries to proffer their good wishes ; as Marie Louise passed through the Galerie de Diane, on her way to Mass, they were drawn up to greet her. But Napoleon was sad and annoyed. He had sent the recalcitrant *corps législatif* about their business ; he feared further defections, and mistrusted even his own brothers.

Probably, of all her surroundings, Marie Louise was alone hopeful, partly because of her youth and natural light-heartedness, and partly because she was still hoodwinked. She was told that negotiations would be resumed, and her father's New Year's letter cheered her :

“DEAR LOUISE,

“I have received your letter of December 12, and am pleased to learn that you are well. I thank you for all your wishes which you sent me for the New Year, and which are dear to me because I know you. I send you mine, with all my heart. As regards peace, rest assured that I do not wish for it less than you, than all France, and, I hope, your husband. It is only in peace that one finds happiness and safety. My views are moderate. I wish for everything that can ensure the continuance of peace, but in this world it is not enough to wish. I have great duties to fulfil towards my allies, and, unfortunately, the questions of a future peace, which I hope will be a speedy one, are very involved. Your country has upset everything. When one arrives at these questions, one has to combat just complaints and prejudices ; but the thing is not the less

the most ardent wish of my heart, and I hope soon that we may be able to reconcile our nations. In England there is no ill-will, but they are making great preparations. This, of course, causes delay till eventually the affair is in train, when, please God, it will go all right. The news you give me of my son [*sic*] makes me very happy. Your brothers and sisters were well the last time I had news of them, also my wife. I am also very well. Believe me,

“Your loving father,

“FRANZ.”

Had Marie Louise been better versed in diplomacy she would have read between the lines of this private and affectionate letter. Her father was warning her, as openly as he dared, that Napoleon, and not France, was the Allies' objective, and that it no longer lay in his power to direct affairs, that he was in the hands of his Allies. But Napoleon was determined to spare her all anxiety possible, and from her entourage she heard more of peace than of war. Yet her reply to her father shows that she had somewhat gauged the situation, which filled her with fear, both for herself, her husband, and her father : “Since your troops crossed the frontier of France the whole nation is in arms. I fear that the Emperor will soon leave me for the army, and that he will leave me in the midst of a city which is preparing to fight for its defence.”

Then burst the thunderclap of Murat's defection. Napoleon would hardly believe it : “No, it cannot be ! Murat ! to whom I gave my sister ! Murat ! to whom I have given a crown !”

Napoleon's extraordinary blindness at this period had extended even to Murat's machinations in Italy. Marie Louise's astute old grandmother, the ex-Queen of Naples,

who had escaped from Sicily to Vienna, her birthplace, by an adventurous route by Constantinople, had warned the French ambassador at Vienna as to the feelings against Napoleon at Naples, and that Murat's agent was treating at Vienna. King Joseph tried in vain to bring Murat back to his allegiance, and Napoleon, as a counter-move, offered the Pope leave to return with his cardinals to Rome. But it was two months too late.

The moment had now come for Napoleon to take the field again, to sally forth once more; but not as conqueror. With his back to the wall, he was to fight *à outrance* for his dominions and his dynasty.

For the second time Marie Louise was appointed Regent, Cambacérès again President of the Council of Regency. King Joseph, late of Spain, was made military governor of Paris, Napoleon having patched up a reconciliation with him. Joseph, in his frivolous cosmopolitan little Court at Mortefontaine, half French, half Spanish, had posed as a martyr and grumbled at his brother. Early in the year his title of King was assured to him, and he was allowed to come back to the Paris he loved, and live at the Luxembourg. He was made a member of the Regent's Council; but she did not know him at all well, and Napoleon had been at no pains to further the acquaintanceship. So Marie Louise could not count much on support from her brother-in-law.

The special letters-patent appointing "our well-beloved spouse, Empress and Queen," etc., etc., differed somewhat from those made out for the first Regency. They implied a conformity to "our orders," and hedged her about with a Council of Ministers, a Council of State, and a Privy Council. Did their tone indicate a want of confidence? Was Napoleon fearful of a *rapprochement* between his wife and her father during his absence?

“ Napoléon, par la grâce de Dieu et les constitutions, Empereur des Français, Roi d’Italie, Protecteur de la Confédération du Rhin, Médiateur de la Confédération Suisse, etc., etc., à tous ceux qui ces présents veront, salut, etc., etc. Voulant donner à notre bien-aimée Épouse, Impératrice, et Reine, Marie-Louise, des marques de la confiance que nous avons en elle, attendu que nous sommes dans l’intention d’aller nous mettre incessamment à la tête de nos armées, pour délivrer notre territoire de la présence de nos ennemis, nous avons résolu de conférer, comme nous conférons par ces présents, à notre bien-aimée Épouse, Impératrice et Reine le titre de Régente, pour en exercer les fonctions en conformité de nos intentions et *de nos ordres tels que nous les auront fait transcrire sur le livre de l’État.* Entendant qu’il soit donné connaissance aux princes et grands dignitaires et à nos ministres les dits ordres et instructions ; et *qu’en aucun cas l’Impératrice en puisse s’écarter de leur teneur* dans l’exercice et les fonctions de Régente ; voulons que l’Impératrice-Régente préside, en notre nom, le Sénat, le Conseil des Ministres, le Conseil d’État, et le Conseil Privé, notamment pour l’examen des recours en grâce, sur lesquels nous l’autorisons à prononcer après avoir entendu les membres du dit Conseil Privé. Toutefois notre intention n’est point que par suite de la présidence conférée à l’Impératrice-Régente, elle puisse autoriser, par sa signature, la présentation d’aucun Senatus-Consulte, ou proclamer aucun loi de l’État, nous référons à cet égard au contenu des ordres et instructions mentionnées ci-dessus.

“ NAPOLÉON.”

The day before his departure Napoleon arranged one of those dramatic scenes of which he was so fond, and by means of which he hoped to leave Marie Louise firmly entrusted to the chivalry of the French nation.

On January 23 the officers of the National Guard of Paris received orders to attend at the Salle des Maréchaux of the Tuileries. Unaware why they had been sent for, they fell in, some seven to eight hundred strong, round the great square hall on the first floor of the Pavillon de l'Horloge. When Napoleon passed through to hear Mass in the chapel he was acclaimed with shouts of "Vive l'Empereur!"

During Mass, the Comtesse de Montesquiou was ordered to bring the King of Rome so that he might enter the hall at the same moment as his mother. The Emperor returned from Mass, went round the ranks, chatting to some of the officers, and then placed himself in the middle of the hall.

The door opposite opened, and the Empress appeared, her boy in her arms. Signing to her to put him down, the Emperor took one of his hands, Marie Louise the other, and they advanced towards the rank of officers.

"Generals and officers of the National Guard," began Napoleon, with much feeling, "I am pleased to see you gathered round me. A part of the French territory is invaded; I am leaving to-night to place myself at the head of the army, and, with the help and valour of my troops, I hope to repulse the enemy beyond the frontier. I leave with confidence, in your guard, on quitting my capital, my wife and my son, on whom are fixed so many hopes. I owe you this proof of confidence in return for all those proofs which you have never ceased to give me in all the principal events of my life. I shall leave them with an easy mind, free from anxiety, when they are under your faithful protection. I leave you what is dearest to me in the world, after France, and entrust them to your care. It may be that, in consequence of the manœuvres I am about to make, that the enemy will seize the opportunity to approach your walls. Should

this occur, remember that it will be only an affair of a few days, and that I shall soon come to your assistance. I enjoin you to be united among yourselves, to resist all insinuations which may be attempted in order to sow disunion amongst you. People will not fail to attempt to shake your loyalty to your duty, but I rely upon your repulsing such perfidious instigations."

Here he paused, and, pointing to the child, who looked very solemn, exclaimed : "I entrust him to you, gentlemen, I entrust him to the affection of my faithful city of Paris. Should the enemy approach I entrust to the courage of the National Guard the Empress and the King of Rome—my wife, my son——" and his voice broke.

The effect was enormous. The hall rang with shouts of "Vive l'Empereur!" "Vive l'Impératrice!" "Vive le Roi de Rome!" There was not a dry eye in the place. Many officers broke the ranks and flung themselves on the Emperor's hands, kissing them, and weeping.

Marie Louise, usually so calm, nearly fainted.

When she had withdrawn with the King of Rome Napoleon held his usual reception of high dignitaries, but it was a less brilliant function than on former occasions, and there was hardly a foreign diplomat present.

Queen Hortense dined with the Emperor and Empress, "a sad evening. She wept as my mother wept when he was leaving her, and I think that her show of affection is sincere."

In the evening there was a reception of *petites entrées*. The Empress retired early, the Emperor soon followed; but before he left he conversed with the ministers, almost in the tone of one making his will. Mollieu, Minister of the Treasury, inquired how to raise money, as the Treasury was being emptied.

"*Mon cher*," Napoleon replied, "if the enemy reaches the gates of Paris, there is no longer an Empire!"

As he withdrew; "*Au revoir, Messieurs, nous nous reverrons, peut-être!*" which filled Rovigo with sadness, for it seemed to him that his master was bidding a last farewell.

The little King of Rome went to sleep that night in Napoleon's arms, his head on his father's breast, his arms round his neck. Napoleon made a sign not to awaken him, and himself placed him carefully in his cot.

In the early morning Marie Louise, in tears, said good-bye to her husband for the last time.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *THE SECOND REGENCY*

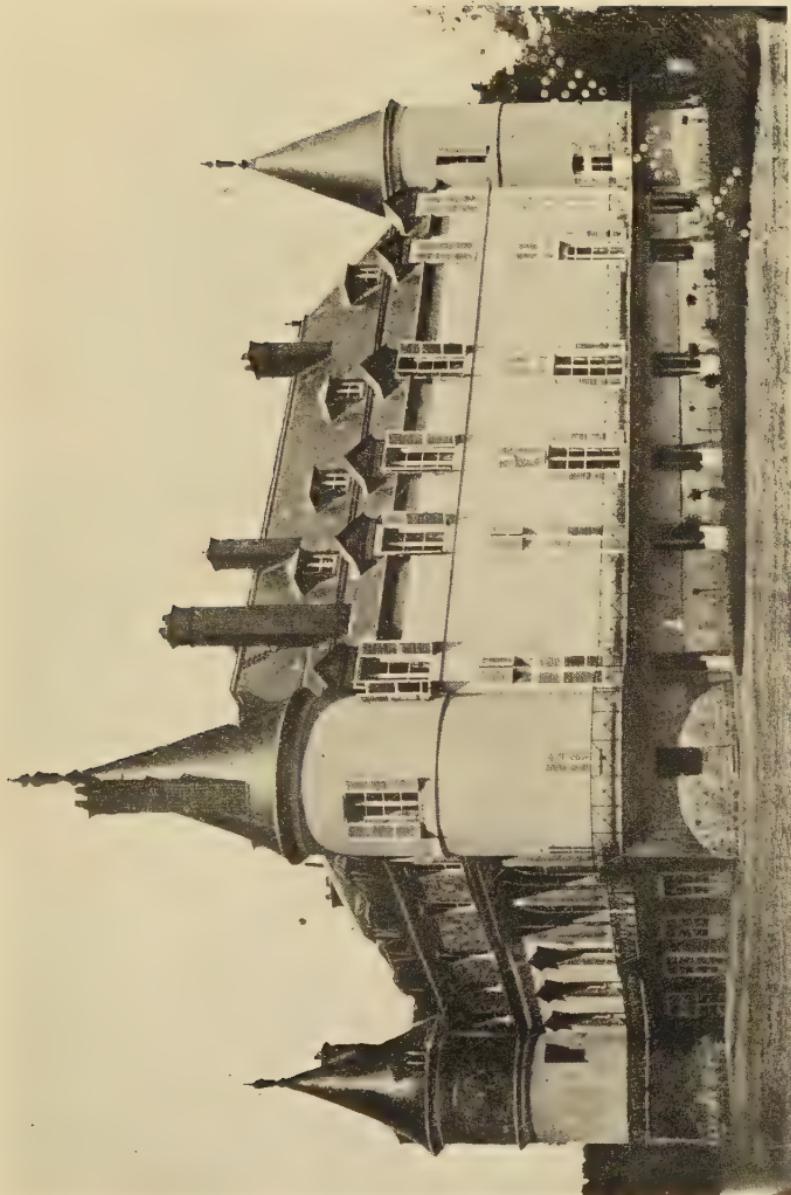
THE day following Napoleon's departure the Empress-Regent received in the Throne-room of the Tuileries a deputation of the National Guard, under Marshal Moncey, presenting an address in which loyalty verged on adulation. On the evening of the same day the Empress wrote to her private secretary : "I beg you to come rather early to me to-morrow. There is nothing but the question of how to frame a reply to the speech of the National Guard. I hope your advice will help me to make a nice one, for I have no idea at all up to the present."

She thought the reply evolved by Ménéval too cold, and had it altered, for she had been so touched by the warmth of the demonstration.

The enthusiasm about Marie Louise was intense in Paris. Dupaty composed a song, which was sung in all the theatres, the chorus :

Gardons la bien !  
Il est parti.

Napoleon had left Paris alone on the 23rd, without any reinforcements, but full of a sanguineness which influenced his generals and his men. On the 25th he had beaten the Prussians at Brienne, "Blücher," wrote his exasperated ally, Schwarzenberg, "running like a school-boy."



CHÂTEAU DE RAMBOUILLET.



But the invasion had thrown Paris into a state of panic. Refugees from a hundred miles round, with their goods and chattels, filled the streets. Worse, Paris, the objective of the Allies, “ who only dreamed of Paris . . . foaming with the wine of champagne they do not cease to shout ‘ À Paris ! ’ ” writes Schwarzenberg—Paris was seething with suppressed sedition. The traitors were sitting on a rail, awaiting the saltatory performance of the domestic feline favourite. A stronger Council of Regency, or a Council of War, was required to meet the occasion. But if King Joseph was weak and fearful, Cambacérès was weaker still, and Marie Louise no Maria Theresa. But in her troubles her thoughts turned to religion. A “ forty-hours ” and a Misericorde were arranged at Notre Dame. At Marie Louise’s own wish intercessions were made at S. Geneviève. But Napoleon would have none of it, and wrote to stop them all.

“ In her councils of Regency,” writes Bausset, “ Marie Louise, because business did not interest her, and also because she mistrusted herself, always followed the advice given her.” In that she resembled her father, who, Napoleon had remarked, “ always agreed with the last person who spoke to him.” “ She had all the weakness of kindness ; never made up her mind about anything,” writes Bausset, “ and really, in the affairs of government, had no other opinion than that which was inspired by people in whom she knew the Emperor placed confidence. . . .” This second Regency was a very different matter to the first. No figure-head was required, but a bold and clever brain ; and it was lamentably lacking.

The month of February opened badly ; Napoleon was beaten by Schwarzenberg at Rothière. Joseph, in Paris, was hurrying on the work of defence and writing to his brother in the lowest of spirits. He had made arrangements to remove the treasure at six hours’

notice ; some *fourgons* in the Place du Carrousel were already loaded. The Museum of the Louvre was shut, and its treasures were to be removed to a place of safety. "The Empress more confident to-day. I have spent the day in instilling hopes into people who have less firmness than the Empress." Later : "Public opinion to-day was downcast, and I have much trouble in keeping up the hopes of a good many people. I saw the Empress yesterday, and I left her more tranquil last night ; she had just received a letter from Your Majesty about the Congress. The men come in, but there is a want of money to clothe them."

He referred to the abortive Congress of Châtillon, just assembled, waging diplomatic conflicts simultaneously with battles. Caulaincourt was doing his best at it, but his master, once more plunged into his element, a whirl of warfare, like a lion at bay, simply would not listen to reason. The Allies were absolutely determined that France should be once more "cribbed, cabined, caged, confined" within her natural frontiers.

On February 6, Napoleon, beaten back out of Troyes, wrote to Joseph to have everything that was precious, that might serve as a trophy, removed from the palace of Fontainebleau. He judged his enemy's looting propensities by his own, but unjustly. Things looked black indeed ; the French troops were separated, at the foot of the Alps, the Pyrenees, or on the Elbe, and the Austrians had lured Murat under their banner. "My marriage has been my misfortune," wrote Napoleon bitterly. "I do not complain of the Empress, but I have relied too much on the Austrians !" He wrote to Marie Louise to send orders to Eugène Beauharnais to evacuate Italy and to join Augereau at Geneva.

The Allies swarmed over Belgium, Châlons capitulated, "which spreads consternation," wrote Joseph. The

following day Marie Louise wrote to him pathetically : " The Emperor tells me not to worry myself. You know that is impossible ! " Joseph began to be anxious about her, hoping it might not be necessary to send her away, but " unable to hide from myself that the consternation and despair of the populace might have sad and fatal results. . . . Men attached to the Government fear that departure of the Empress might fill the populace of the city with despair, and yield a capital and an Empire to the Bourbons."

Things looked so bad that Marie Louise feared that Napoleon might be tempted to allow himself to be killed ; allusions in his letters show that this was no unfounded alarm, and that he knew of her anxiety on that score. But anything was preferable to a dishonourable peace.

Then, suddenly, the scene changed with lightning rapidity. Blücher was under forty miles from Paris when Napoleon beat the Russians successively at Champ-Aubert and at Montmirail, and Blücher at Vauchamps. The revulsion of feeling in Paris was great. When Joseph reviewed the National Guard in the Cour du Carrousel of the Tuileries, the little King looking on from a window, delighted, was greeted with shouts of " Vive l'Empereur ! " The Empress ordered cannon to be fired, and the good news to be announced at the theatres that evening. For even in this stress Paris was still frivolous, and the theatres open.

Napoleon followed up his victories with that of Montereau over Schwarzenberg. " The Austrians have guaranteed my palace of Fontainebleau from the pillage of the Cossacks ! " he cried. His pen as indefatigable as his sword, he wrote a persuasive and pathetic letter to the Kaiser pointing out that it was to the interest of Austria as well as of France to make peace. He instructed the Regent to write with her own hand letters to the mayors

of all the important towns on the northern frontier, of Orleans, Belgium—letters which were to be all of the same gist, but diversely worded; letters to stir them up to patriotic exertions, to acquaint them of the recent successes, and to point out the national danger if France lay supine. The National Guard was loyal and devoted to the Empress and the King of Rome, but Paris lay apathetic, desirous only of peace, and that as quickly as possible, and unwilling to act except on the defensive. On the 21st the Empress held a Council to arrange how best to obtain the two thousand horses for which Napoleon had asked. Three days later she held another, “much encouraged by the successes.”

On the 24th Napoleon re-entered Troyes, the capital of Champagne, and Marie Louise was ordered to have thirty guns fired for the event. The day before Schwarzenberg had sent to sound Napoleon as to an armistice. The latter taunted the Kaiser’s envoy with falling in with England’s suggestions and making war on her own dynasty, “the Emperor working to dethrone his own daughter.” The envoy disclaimed it. “Such a project would be against nature. The Emperor, my august sovereign, would never lend himself to it.”

Napoleon’s successes having somewhat lowered the tone of the Allies at the Congress, they offered ten days in which he was to accede to or refuse their terms. Otherwise, when the date was reached, the Congress would dissolve.

Marie Louise held an extraordinary Council, which voted solid against the enemy’s conditions. All Napoleon’s letters to Joseph were read, and he was implored to make peace.

On Sunday 27 a grand procession left the War Office. Preceded by a band of military music, and followed by an escort of cavalry, two officers of the

Imperial Guard, four of the line, and four of the National Guard, bore in triumph to the Tuileries fourteen flags taken from the enemy—one Austrian, four Prussian, nine Russian. Previously to being deposited at the Invalides, these were presented to the Empress-Regent with a loyal and stirring address, by the Duke of Feltre, the Minister of War. Marie Louise made a spirited reply : “ Monsieur le Duc de Feltre, Minister of War, I behold with deep emotion the trophies which you present to me by order of the Emperor, my august sovereign. In my eyes they are hostages of the salvation of the country. At the sight of them may Frenchmen rise in arms! May they press round their monarch ! Their courage, led by his genius, will soon have effected the deliverance of his genius ! ”

Thus, indeed, might Maria Theresa have addressed her officers during the invasion of Austria by Frederic. But the harangue of her descendant was not destined to bear similar fruit. This memorable occasion was to be Marie Louise’s last public appearance as Empress of the French. For her words fell on deaf ears. In January Metternich had said to the Czar : “ On the day the Empire falls there is nothing possible but the return of the Bourbons. Never will the Emperor Francis support another Government than theirs.”

Yet at that moment she was sanguine again, and had written to her father only the evening before, feeling sure that he would not abandon her, and hoping that the worst was past. “ It is not good statesmanship to wish to force us into a shameful peace which could not last. Here they will rather die than accept such conditions. Only think, my dear father, in what a situation I should find myself. It would be a blow which I could never survive. I implore you therefore, my dear father, to remember me and my son. You know how much

I love you, and I believe that I possess your paternal affection." She added that the anxiety and the gravity of the situation, and her husband's absence, were affecting her health, and ended : "It rests with you to put an end to my anxiety, does it not? You will do it!"

It was but the lull of the storm. The very day that the trophies were deposited at the Invalides, Blücher began again advancing on Paris. He reached the very gates of Meaux. Behind Caulaincourt's back at Châtilly, England, Austria, Russia, and Prussia bound themselves by a treaty to last for twenty years, to continue the war *à outrance*. At Paris all was discouragement again. Marie Louise, with only panic-stricken Joseph to lean upon, felt more of a victim than a sovereign. She presided at an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Regency which agreed, with one dissentient voice, to accept the conditions of the allies, conditions that would, at least, preserve the dynasty.

At the time Napoleon was at Craonne and at Laon. Joseph implored him to seize this opportunity to make peace, and even suggested that Marie Louise might intercede officially with her father. But this only drew down a severe reprimand. Napoleon quite declined to have Marie Louise interfere ; he was still too proud "to be helped by women," he said. "I am annoyed that you have been speaking to my wife of the Bourbons and of the opposition which the Empress of Austria might bring to bear against them. I hope you will avoid such conversations. I will not be protected by my wife ; that idea would spoil her, and cause discord between us. Why talk to her like that ? Let her live as she lives and only speak to her of what she must know in order to sign, and above all, avoid any conversation which might lead her to think that I would consent to be protected by her and her father. Never, for four years, has the name of

Bourbon or of Austria passed my lips. Besides which, all that would only trouble her tranquillity and spoil her excellent nature. The Emperor of Austria can do nothing, because he is led by Metternich and bought by England. That is the secret of everything."

Though kindly considerate as ever of Marie Louise, Napoleon had indeed taken the measure both of his wife and her father !

The Allies were in a bad plight ; recriminating over each other, they remained eight days inactive, which gave Napoleon time to reorganize his feeble army, retake Rheims, and put Soissons and even Compiègne in a state of defence. Meanwhile the Congress pined away from inanition. Three days he spent imperially at Rheims, directing the Empire by imperious letters ; "The guard was melting," he wrote, and ordered the works on the fortifications of Paris to be pushed on hurriedly ; then he learnt that the mayor had opened the gates of Bordeaux to the English.

Napoleon was now forced to alter his tone to Marie Louise. He wrote asking her to write to her father to beg the latter's intervention on his behalf. Marie Louise replied the next day late by the following letter, the only one ever discovered of a daily correspondence which would have cleared up for posterity much that remains unknown.

"MON CHER AMI,

"I have just received yours. I see with much pleasure that you are happy at the turn of your affairs. I hope they will now go quite to your satisfaction. At least I wish it. I wish, *mon cher ami*, that you may be as happy as you deserve to be. The whole of Paris is full of the good news. It seems much has been added to what the courier had to tell, so that there is much

talk of battles now and of peace. I wrote, as you wished, to my father, but as it is a little late to-day I am afraid I cannot send you a copy of the letter. You shall have it to-morrow, for I will send it by the eleven o'clock orderly. I wish very much my letters may make a good impression, but I do not think they will. My father never listens to me about business. . . . I found the Arch-Chancellor very brave this morning. He spoke of his courage in a most surprising manner. I have not seen the King. He hardly ever comes to see me in the mornings. I think this will please you. Your son kisses you ; he is very well indeed. He slept very badly this night ; his sleep was restless, and he cried out in his sleep. He said he had dreamed of his dear papa, but he did not say in what way, and we were not able to make him explain. My health is very good. The spring suits me so well. The last two years the cold has not suited me. It is mild enough for me to ride. That does me much good, but what would do me most good of all is to see you again and not to be worried. I love you and I kiss you tenderly.

“*Ta fidèle amie,*

“LOUISE.”

This letter was seized by the enemy.

To prevent a junction of Blücher and the Czar and to block the way to Paris, Napoleon attacked Alexander at Arcis-sur-Aube. He was heroic, but outnumbered. His prestige gone, forced to retreat, he undertook a more audacious movement than any he had yet launched.

The third birthday of the little King of Rome was being celebrated in Paris while his father was fighting his last battle but one and exposing himself more recklessly than he had ever done before. Marie Louise, the next day, ignorant of the rupture of the negotiations, as of

much else, wrote again to her father : "The nation is full of courage and energy, especially the peasants, who are incensed at the bad treatment they have received. Your troops may be beaten. The armies of the Emperor are finer and stronger than ever. It is to your interest, as to ours, to offer us again the conditions of Frankfrt. If not, in a few months, you might be forced into a more onerous peace. . . . In the name of all that is most sacred, I conjure you, do not let yourself be led by the greed of England, by the ambition and hatred of Count Stadion. For you it will entail the sacrifice of the interests of your Empire, the happiness of your family, the repose of your life. The peace which is offered us, and which humiliates us, is impossible to accept. You may rest assured that, as I know the Emperor, he will never make up his mind to it. You should go back to the conditions of Frankfrt, the only ones profitable for France as for Austria."

Indeed, Matie Louise had not been allowed to know anything except what it was necessary for her to sign ! Hitherto Napoleon had ordered Joseph to conceal or mitigate bad news. "Keep the Empress cheerful !" had been his watchword to his brother. Her eyes, however, were shortly to be opened, and by Napoleon himself.

One evening, during the last days of March, the Empress-Regent was receiving the *petites entres* at the Tuileries. All was gloom and uncertainty. Had the enemy retreated, or was he converging on the capital ? Even the ministers were as ignorant as the public. Calm and mistress of herself, hiding her anxiety, Marie Louise sat down to the card-table, asking the Duke de Rovigo to be her partner ; but, ere the packs were opened, she suddenly announced that she did not wish to play. Drawing the Duke aside, she inquired of him if he had any news of the Emperor. When he replied in the negative,

she said : "Then I can give you news, for I have received some this morning." Savary was surprised, as no courier had arrived. "It is true," added the Regent, "that no courier has come in, but I shall surprise you even more when I tell you that Marshal Blücher has sent me a letter from the Emperor, found, he says, with many others, on a courier at the very moment when he was taken by the enemy. To tell you the truth, I am in terrible anxiety, since I have considered the consequences which may result from this accident. The Emperor has always, since his departure, written to me in cypher, and all those cyphered letters have reached me in safety, but this one, which is not cyphered, is the only one in which he tells me of his plan, and it has fallen into the enemies' hands. There is an ill-luck about this which makes me miserable!" And, indeed, this intercepted letter was an important one, ending with the cryptic phrase : "By this manœuvre I am saved or lost!"

Napoleon was on the point of marching to Metz. In three days he should have roused the frontier and the Rhine garrisons, the troops from the Low Countries and Lyons could have advanced. The peasants of the border provinces were ready, on the slightest reverse to the enemy, to rise and cut off their retreat. The Allies were in a tight place. A national insurrection would have backed Napoleon up. But traitors in Paris—men he had loaded with favours—were in league with the foe, and that fatal letter had given Blücher the clue as to the course to pursue.

Well might Marie Louise be anxious. She knew not in whom to trust, whom to consult. Queen Hortense, indeed, came often to her, and they made lint for the wounded. But a letter from Marie Louise and one from Rovigo fell into the Czar's hands. Both acquainted

Alexander with the disloyal machinations in Paris. On reading it the Czar determined to march on the capital at dawn. While Napoleon went on east towards Lorraine, the Allies made for Paris. On March 27 Napoleon learnt, through a prisoner, that Marmont, left to guard Paris, had been defeated. Despite the advice of his best generals, he turned back towards the capital. Leaving his army to follow by forced marches, Napoleon, alone with Berthier and Caulaincourt, hurled himself into a post-chaise and took the Paris road.

The city, dreading reprisals for Moscow, was mad with terror at the approach of the Allies. There was no spurt of courage, no national leader, no patriotic movement; the very theatres remained open. The great-granddaughter of Maria Theresa did not seize the situation and her courage in both hands. King Joseph was shaking in his shoes; the garrison was small, weak, and ill-armed, and the Czar and the King of Prussia only fourteen leagues off!

On the Saturday King Joseph reviewed a batch of conscripts, who went off to the front. Next day they returned, scattered, war-stained, wounded. Evidently there was fighting near at hand. In two hours the scene on the boulevards changed. They became crowded with suburban population, weeping and driving before them their sheep and cows and carrying their little household gods. Cannon were heard in the distance.

Queen Hortense came to the lonely Empress at the Tuileries and helped her with her preparations for a possible departure from Paris.

At half-past eight on the evening of March 28 the Empress-Regent, seated in her arm-chair, presided at what was to be her last Council, a Council which was to determine the fate of her husband and son. For it deliberated if it were safe for her and the King of Rome to remain in

Paris. Feltre, the War Minister, opened the ball : "He mentioned all the dangers and none of the resources." He was determined that she should immediately leave for beyond the Loire, and his words sounded as if he washed his hands of the consequences. Boulay, however, urged the Empress to instant action—that she should emulate the example of Maria Theresa, and, going to the Hôtel de Ville, the faubourgs, the boulevards, with her son in her arms, raise the people of Paris in defence of the capital and the dynasty. Rovigo, Massa, and Cadore supported him warmly. "Paris had always decided the fate of France." King Joseph and Cambacérès alone kept silence, and the Regent glanced interrogatively round her councillors with anxious eyes.

Then Talleyrand spoke, and all present hung on his words. Each doubted his loyalty, but all were curious to see how the deep, dangerous man would express himself. "Words," we have from himself, "are meant to conceal your thoughts" ; but, on this occasion, slow, dignified, authoritative, "he had the cleverness to speak the truth," plainly pointing out that the departure of the Empress from Paris would leave the way open for the royalists. Rovigo again supported his view, and, after a few minutes' silence, the Chancellor took the vote. It was almost unanimously in favour of her remaining.

But then Feltre reconsidered his opinion, and made a long and warm and loyal harangue urging that the Empress should rally the provinces by her presence, and marvelling at those who would "leave the son of Hector at the mercy of the Greeks." Then, at last, the voice of Joseph was heard ; he had hitherto kept silence and had not cast his vote. He now produced and read two letters from Napoleon himself bearing upon the question. One was from Nogent, dated February 4, and ran : "If, in consequence of the events of the war, communications

were cut off, I wish that the persons of the Empress and my son should not be *exposed*. . . . If news of a lost battle or of my death comes, you will be acquainted with it before the household ; make the Empress and the King of Rome go to Rambouillet. . . . Never let the Empress and the King of Rome fall into the enemies' hands. . . . If I die, my son reigns and the Empress is Regent. For the honour of the French, they should not let themselves be captured, but rather retire to the last village. Do you remember what was said of the wife of Philip V.? What would indeed be said of the Empress? That she had abandoned the throne of her son and mine ; and the Allies would like to put an end to everything by leading them as prisoners to Vienna. . . . I would rather," it concluded, "have my son's throat cut, than have him brought up at Vienna as an Austrian prince, and I think well enough of the Empress to know that she is of the same opinion as is possible for a wife and mother."

The second letter, written on March 16, between the battles of Craonne and Laon contained these emphatic words : "Do not allow, in any case, the Empress and the King of Rome to fall into the enemy's hands. If the enemy advances on Paris in such force as to make all resistance impossible, send away, in the direction of the Loire, the Empress, my son, the great dignitaries, the ministers, officials of the Senate, the President of the Council of State, the great officers of the Crown, the Baron de la Bouillérie, and the Treasure. Do not leave my son, and remember I would sooner see him in the Seine than in the hands of the enemies of France."

These letters staggered the Council. Opinions wavered. It was easier to follow the old line of blind obedience to Napoleon than to take responsible action, yet some members still urged contrary views. Talleyrand repeated his remarks. Secretly he wished for a Regency,

which, with himself as the Prime Minister "of a weak and inexperienced woman, offered a fine prospect to his selfishness." Cadore proposed to ignore the letters. Of what use to assemble if the Emperor was to give orders? The Regent, very embarrassed, asked Cambacérès' personal advice. He, as ever, feared to compromise himself and made an excuse. Joseph put an end to all discussion by declaring all rebels who went counter to Napoleon's expressed wishes. A third and last vote was taken; it was in favour of Marie Louise's departure. She then reread Napoleon's letters, and, saying that she considered them a sacred order, fixed her departure for nine o'clock the next morning.

The Council broke up at ten in the evening. Sadly the members descended the grand staircase of the Tuileries, Talleyrand alone ironical and enigmatic. All felt that it was the beginning of the end. Some went up to Rovigo and urged him, as Minister of Police, "to raise Paris in the morning, and the Empress will not go." But he, remembering the Revolution, hesitated to light a blaze he might not be able to quench. Each said good-bye to his colleague, knowing it was the last act of the Government.

King Joseph, Cambacérès, and Feltre conducted the Regent back to her private apartments. They tried to show her how her presence would foil disloyal plots, how disastrous would be a retreat, and urged her to take a line of her own. Marie Louise was torn all ways at once. At one moment she determined to go with her son to the Hôtel de Ville and show herself, the next she lacked courage to take the responsibility.

"You are my appointed councillors," she said, "and I will not take upon myself to give an order contrary to those of the Emperor, and to the resolutions of the Council, without your formal and signed advice,"

adding, as she left them, “should I fall into the Seine with my son, as the Emperor said, I should not hesitate a moment to go ; a wish so distinctly expressed is to me an order.”

But when she found herself in her bedroom, she threw her hat on the bed, and, sitting down on the sofa, hid her face in her hands and wept violently. In the midst of her sobs one overheard the words : “*Mon Dieu !* let them make up their minds and put an end to my agony !”

“History,” says Bausset, “will be unjust to Marie Louise if she is accused of abandoning her capital when she should have remained. In the ordinary course of a life on a throne unshaken by political jars she would have kept the love and admiration of France, as she would have been its joy and ornament.”

“Marie Louise,” says Lamartine, “sheltered herself behind ceremonials, in retreat and in silence, against the ill-will which arose against her. . . . Napoleon loved her for her pride and superiority. She was the blazon of his affiliation to great dynasties. She was the mother of his son, perpetuator of his ambition. . . . People were unjust enough to demand of Marie Louise the passionate devotion of love, when her nature could only be inspired with duty and respect for the soldier who looked upon her but a hostage of Germany, a guarantee of prosperity. This constraint acted as a restraint on her natural charms, gave her a grave expression, intimidated her mind, and chilled her heart. People only saw in her a foreign decoration attached to the pillars of the throne. Even history, written in ignorance of the truth and with the resentment of Napoleon’s courtiers, has calumniated this Princess. Those who knew her will restore to her, not the stoical and theatrical glory demanded of her, but her nature.

. . . The false dumbness of her silence hid womanly thoughts which bore her far away from this Court. Magnificent, but hard exile! . . . She did not know how to pretend, neither during her grandeur nor after the reverses of her master; it was her crime. The meretricious world of this Court demanded a pretence of conjugal passion from a captive of victory. She was too natural to simulate love, when she had but obedience, terror, resignation to offer. History will accuse her, nature will pardon her. She was asked to play a part; the actress failed, the woman remained."

## CHAPTER XVII

### *THE THIRD FLIGHT*

**N**O one closed their eyes in the Tuileries on the night of March 28. All through the mild spring moonlit night packing went on fast and furiously. Servants ran frightened through the lighted chambers, and many an old domestic shed tears. Not only the Empress's personal and private property was being removed by her, but the treasure, and the crown jewels were being loaded on the *fourgons* which were to follow her carriage.

In the early hours the Duchesse de Montebello came to the *préfet du palais*, who had not been to bed at all, to inform him that her Majesty would leave Paris at 6 a.m., and that he was to accompany her. Wise after the event, Bausset writes that he "should have remembered the old adage—*qui quitte la partie, la perd.*" Musketry firing was heard in the distance round Paris at 5 a.m. The city was attacked on three sides.

At the hour appointed he was in readiness with the carriages drawn up at the Pavillon de Flore, while expectant crowds gathered in the Place du Carrousel, only too ready to cut the traces and to keep the Regent with them. Her mere presence seemed to the populace a defence against the invasion of the foreigner.

Marie Louise, ready dressed, her ladies around her, with her son, whose childish pertinacity in asking questions respecting this unusual matutinal departure she had some

difficulty in quelling, sat awaiting a final counsel from King Joseph. Instead came, regardless of etiquette, officers of the National Guard on duty and others, invading her apartments. They had heard of her leaving ; they reminded her of Napoleon's last words. "Remain !" they cried. "We swore to defend you !" She thanked them, weeping. Her instinct was to remain. A presentiment told her that if she left the Tuileries it was for ever. But the Emperor's orders !

By 9 a.m. all Bausset's preparations had been completed ; but still no message. Till ten o'clock she waited, and then she decided to start. But she had reckoned without her son.

This three-year-old baby, as if foreseeing his life-exile, quite declined to be taken from the room.

"I won't leave my home ! I'm master here, now papa's away !" he screamed, working himself into a little passion. "I won't go to Rambouillet. *C'est un vilain château ! Let's stay here !*"

He yelled, he kicked, he clung, first to the window-curtains and then to the balustrade of the staircase, amid the sad silence of all around him. The Comtesse de Montesquiou and Madame Soufflot could not manage him at all, and, finally, M. de Cannisy, his equerry, had to come to their assistance and literally carry him out and into the carriage, while his *gouvernante* tried to soothe him by promising soon to bring him back. It was an inauspicious start.

The suite that accompanied the Regent in her flight were the Duchesse de Montebello, and the Comtesses de Luçay, de Castiglione, Montalivet ; the Comte de Beauharnais, Gontaut and Haussonville, chamberlains ; Prince Aldobrandini, Héricy, Lambertye, de Cussy, equerries ; Bausset, *préfet du palais* ; de Seyssel, de Grouchy, Dr. Corvisart, and three others. With the King of Rome

went his *gouvernante*, Mesdames Soufflot, Bomber, Mesgrigny, Cannisy, equerry, and a doctor. Cambacérès and the President of the Senate accompanied the Regent, but she left Paris without ordering the Senate and the *corps législatif* to move to another town.

In silence the sad procession passed out of the gate by the Pont Royal. Not a cheer was raised, not a tear shed by the small crowd as it moved along the quays, of Tuileries, of Chaillot, and left the city by the barrier of Passy. Only a mixed guard of twelve hundred men—cavalry of the guard and *gendarmes d'élite*—formed the escort. Cussy, Seyssel, and Bausset, driving in a berline with Haussenville, thought it hardly strong enough. “A hundred Cossacks and one gun,” says the latter, “would have spread confusion.”

“Nothing ever less resembled a court journey than this tumultuous retreat of all sorts,” remarks the *préfet du palais*. First came twelve heavy berlines with the Imperial coat of arms; then the state coach and the coronation coach, *fourgons* with precious furniture, archives and papers, the treasure, the plate, the crown diamonds. Yet such was the state of Paris and the Parisians that the theatres were open that night, *Iphigenia in Aulis* was given at the opera, and the *Moniteur* had appeared that morning with a belated report of Napoleon’s victory at St. Dizier, the last war-news the *Moniteur* was to give.

As the Empress fled, Chateaubriand, “from the heights of the towers of Notre Dame, saw the head of the Russian columns appear, like the first undulation of the flow of the tide upon the sands,” as he had seen it in his boyhood at St. Malo. “I felt as a Roman must have felt when, from the summit of the Capitol, he descried the soldiers of Alaric and the old city of Latinus at his feet. So I saw the Russian soldiers, at my feet

the old city of the Gauls—Paris, which for centuries had not spied the watch-fires of the enemy—Paris was the point whence Bonaparte started to overrun the world ; he returned thither, leaving behind him the enormous conflagration of his useless conquests."

At three in the afternoon the Empress reached Rambouillet. She at once wrote to King Joseph : "Kindly send me word if the enemy has advanced. I await your reply before deciding if I go farther or stay here. I beg you, in the first instance, to tell me what you think the safest place. I hope you may write and tell me to return to Paris ; it is the piece of news which would cause me most joy." All those surrounding her tried to spare her as much as possible on this sad journey, to keep from her bad news, to hide the falling away of those she imagined faithful to her. "Once at Rambouillet," Bausset says that "the ranks closed up, and round the Empress and her son a group of persons collected, all animated by the most honourable and disinterested devotion."

Meanwhile Marshals Marmont and Mortier, left to protect Paris, found that Lieutenant-General and Governor Joseph had neglected to put the city in a state of defence. All day they maintained an heroic resistance to Prussians, Russians, and Austrians. But by the time Marie Louise was reaching Rambouillet the tide of invaders had lapped all round Paris. To save it from assault and bombardment, Marmont concluded an armistice, and decided that night to evacuate the city.

King Joseph had sworn to the National Guard that he would not leave Paris. But he had had some practice in running away in Spain, and at midnight he came spurring into the courtyard of Rambouillet, having fled from the city before the defence was over. He brought no news of Napoleon, but gave orders that the fugitive Court should hurry on next morning to Chartres.

There the *préfet* was away, but Marie Louise put up at the Préfecture for the night, terribly anxious for news of her husband.

At ten o'clock at night of the day she had left Paris Napoleon, in his post-chaise, was driving furiously towards Paris. At the Fountain of Juvissy he happened upon a column of the evacuating army and heard the news. Between him and the city he could see the bivouac-fires of the enemy. Twenty minutes' deliberation, pacing up and down the roadside in the dark, and then Napoleon, despite the fact that he had thirty thousand Imperial Guard to his hand, threw up the sponge. "If the enemy reaches the gates of Paris there is no longer an empire!" he had said.

Retiring to Fontainebleau, he sent off at four in the morning a disguised courier to the Empress. She had pushed on to Châteaudun with her huge and unwieldy train, but Joseph wrote that evening: "I have sent the letter on to the Empress. I am leaving to-night to follow Her Majesty. She was going to Tours, but after what Your Majesty has said she will go to Blois with what is here of the Government. That is also the plan of the Ministers, who are here and leave to-night. The Empress and the King of Rome are safe. I saw them this evening. This evening they will be at Châteaudun. The Ministers of War, of Finance, of the Treasury, of the Home Office, and the Navy are here."

These officials, with King Jérôme and the Queens of Spain and Westphalia, had just arrived, Queen Hortense having joined her mother Josephine at her château of Navarre, in Normandy. They brought news that the Emperor had sent an envoy to the Kaiser, who was at Dijon, offering peace on any terms, but that Schwarzenberg had declined an armistice, as he had already come to terms with Marmont separately, as we have seen. The

only Government officials left in Paris were the *préfets* of the Seine and of the city. Talleyrand had asked permission to remain, but it had not been granted. So he made a feint of rejoining the Regent, only to return to Paris quietly, there to await events and spin his web.

Marie Louise at this moment might still have saved the Empire for her son. Bausset is of opinion that she should have accepted the situation, and, replying to the proclamation of the Allies saying that they fought Napoleon only, have secured a Regency which would have assured the peace and security of Europe, which was all the Allies then sought. A year later the Czar himself remarked : "Last year a Regency would have been possible." But he was not supported by Austria, and had to fall back on the Bourbons ; for on April 1 the Kaiser wrote that a Regency would be dangerous, that Napoleon would reign under Marie Louise's name. He preferred his provinces to his daughter.

But the suite with the Empress thought of nothing but flight. It was Good Friday. But no celebration of the day was possible even for such a devout daughter of the Church as *Louise la Pieuse*. There was no rest for the panic-stricken horde. The long line of heavy coaches, crowded carriages, of *fourgons* loaded with treasure, of weary soldiers and worn-out teams, trailing along the road, pushed on to Vendôme. The Empress's train alone had a hundred horses to it. There Marie Louise slept, or tried to, for a few hours ; for her nerves were on the rack, and her health was already failing under the storm and stress. In reply to a courier from Fontainebleau announcing that the Allies had entered Paris, Joseph writes to his brother : "Sire, the Empress has just left for Blois, where she wishes to remain tomorrow to let her escort and her horses rest. She shows a courage and a calmness beyond her years and sex. I

am awaiting the arrival of my family to leave here also."

The Ministers and their staffs were scattered along the road ; Joseph had no one to read Napoleon's cypher. He wrote begging the Emperor to fix upon a seat of government, and to Berthier imploring him to persuade Napoleon to sue for peace.

The next day's journey to Blois was a terrible one, made in pouring rain. The road was unfinished and axle-deep in mud. The Empress's carriages stuck fast. All the horses of the other carriages had to be taken out and harnessed to one carriage at a time to drag them out. The cavalry, with the fifteen treasure-wagons and many baggage-wagons, had travelled all day and all the night, but only reached Blois early on the morning of the 2nd. A *fourgon* with two millions of francs went astray to Orléans, and only turned up later. The state carriages, even the great gilt-and-glass coronation coach, never intended for such a jaunt, were shockingly knocked about, covered with mud, washed by the rain, and then coated in mud again.

Though the Empress had started in the small hours, she did not reach Blois till dusk. A silent, curious crowd watched the arrival of the sorry procession as it passed through the narrow winding streets of the old capital of the Valois kings between a line of mixed troops and the scanty remains of the Imperial Guard. The Regent was received by the *préfet* and conducted to the Préfecture. But the Household and the Councils, even Madame Mère, who had joined the fugitives, and the wandering Kings and Queens, were lodged anywhere and anyhow—up and down steps, some at a distance.

It was a terrible Easter Day that Marie Louise spent at Blois. First she heard mass said by the Abbé Galbois, for she had brought no chaplain with her in her flight.

Then she received the civic authorities. Leading the King of Rome by the hand, she passed round the circle, saying a word to each present, beginning with the clergy, and trying in vain to hide her sadness. Next came her brothers-in-law and the Queens, and then a Council was held, which did nothing but talk and passed no edicts. Some of the ministers who had fled to Tours returned ; some were at Orléans and remained there ; others those of Religion and of the Library, had escaped as far as Brittany. All who assembled in the Préfecture were in undress, booted and spurred, ready to ride off, and were without their despatch-boxes. The palace was more like a headquarter staff than a Court. But Cambacérès, "with whom came etiquette," had himself borne ceremoniously to the Council in a sedan-chair he had unearthed.

At first the Empress was left in the dark and not given any newspapers or despatches to read. So she only thought that a disastrous peace had been concluded. A prey to hopes and fears, she wrote daily to Napoleon during the six days she spent at Blois, regretting, now that it was too late, that she had left Paris, and not believing it possible that her father would sacrifice her and her son.

On the 2nd Napoleon sent orders to his relations not to cumber up the city of Blois, which was none too well pleased with this unexpected visitation, and none too well provisioned. He suggested that they should scatter south. But this hardly suited the plans of Joseph and Jérôme who wished to strike a blow for their future ; Louis kept very quiet, devoutly observing Easter. Moreover, none of them had any money, all their allowances being in arrears, so that any move was impossible.

The contagion of the disloyalty in Paris had reached the troops with Napoleon, and on Easter Day Ney told him the truth—that the army would no longer follow

him, and that all was lost. So to Ménéval, in cypher, wrote Napoleon, bidding him prepare the Empress to induce her father and Metternich to secure the Regency for her, though even that might be impossible, and he added enigmatically that, in the latter case, anything might happen, even his death, in which event nothing would be left to the Empress but to throw herself into her father's arms.

Ménéval received this letter on the 4th. It made the faithful servant extremely anxious. He burnt the letter, but confided its contents to the Duchesse, on whom, should any fatality happen, would rest the onus of telling Marie Louise. She was unsympathetic. Without imparting his fears to the Empress, Ménéval induced her at once to send the Duc de Cadore, Secretary of the Regency, to the Kaiser with a letter. The latter being godfather to the Duc's son, Marie Louise hoped the Duc would be a good ambassador for the King of Rome's cause.

"BLOIS, April 4, 1814.

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I am sending you the Duc de Cadore to acquaint you with our sad situation. I ask you, as a favour, to receive him yourself. He will tell you of it better than I can write. Our situation is so sad and alarming that my son and I have no refuge except with you. I am sure that, at this moment, you alone can come to my help, and that you will not sacrifice my tranquillity and the interests of your grandson to England and Russia. I know that the Duc de Vicenza has gone to Paris to negotiate and that the Emperor Alexander has refused to see him. I am sure that the Emperor, in this critical position, will make every sacrifice to give peace and repose to his people. Paris would have made a better defence had it not thought that it was being

attacked by you and that you would never abandon your daughter and grandson. It is, therefore, into your hands that I commit myself, dear father: I am convinced that you will save us from this awful situation. I am sending the Duc de Cadore to you from the place where I have taken refuge. My health is suffering from all these misfortunes. I am sure that you would not wish me to remain in this cruel anxiety long. Once more, have pity on me. I place in you the safety of what is dearest to me in this world—a son too young to understand misfortune and grief. I hope soon to have to thank you for the happiness and repose which we shall owe to you. I kiss your hand and am your obedient daughter,

“LOUISE.”

That very morning Napoleon signed his abdication, and sent Caulaincourt, Ney, and Macdonald to plead the King of Rome’s cause with the Czar, all unaware that, with Marmont, his last remaining forces had gone over to the Bourbons.

The pathetic position of the Empress at Blois, and the intense anxiety she was in, touched the hearts of the most faithful of her servants. “She sometimes,” writes Ménéval, “expressed to us her regret at having left Paris, and her wish to rejoin the Emperor.” He mentions the obstacles to this course which certain of her household placed in her way, the conflict of opinion around her which led her to put off the project which was in her mind. “Her anxiety was at its height; the violent emotions which she had experienced, the tears she had continually shed, her sad and sleepless nights, had induced a state of nerves which almost amounted to convulsions. She could not imagine the state of feeling which reigned in Paris. The assurances she had had from her father constantly returned to her mind; and she

could not persuade herself that the Emperor of Austria would sacrifice her with her husband and her son. Still the events which were hurrying on in Paris left her no illusion. She was overwhelmed ; but, like a drowning sailor, she clung obstinately to the paternal affection which seemed to her her only means of safety. Hearing that the Emperor of Austria was not in Paris, she hoped that he would not commit himself to what was done in his absence and that his voice would be heard."

The Duc de Rovigo, another "faithful friend," writes : "The Empress was abandoned to intense anxiety. During the week we spent at Blois her face was continually bathed in tears ; she had formed quite a new opinion about the French. The malice of those who forced her from the throne imputed to her weakness of will part of those misfortunes which befell her, yet they were not her fault at all. Had the Empress, only a young woman of less than two and twenty, been of an age and experience which gains self-confidence, and allowed her to avail herself of the advice of those in whom she could trust, events would probably have taken a different turn ; but she was not in that position ; the Emperor had arranged her surroundings, and she set an example of submission. In her private, as well as in her public life, she never transgressed the rigid conventionality demanded by her youth, and which did not permit of conversation with any one whatever except those who had been appointed her councillors. I had the honour to see her several times during these sad moments, and I was able to judge for myself of the devotion which she felt to the Emperor. She said to me one day : 'Those who were of the opinion that I should stay in Paris were right, and my father's troops would perhaps not have driven me out. What can I think when I see that he allows all this !'"

In the small hours of the eventful 4th Joseph and Jérôme, with Feltre, the War Minister, rode off to see if Orléans would do for the seat of the Regent's Government. Joseph intended to go on to Fontainebleau to communicate with his brother, but hearing that some of the Allied troops lay on the road between them, he hurried back to Blois. Then, with the War Minister and fifty clerks, they tried to recruit fresh troops, and issued an optimistic manifesto to the distant departments.

Blois was crammed, not a bed to be had, each householder had taken in a guest, when on Wednesday, the 6th, the École Polytechnique, that of St. Cyr and of Charenton, came flying from Paris to add to the crowd and confusion.

Marmont's defection at the critical moment had cast the fatal die. The Czar refused Napoleon's abdication in favour of his son, and Vicenza and his colleagues returned to Fontainebleau, bringing only the Allies' demand for an unconditional surrender. On the 6th the Bourbons were recalled, and the exile to Elba was decreed.

Out of pity, the Empress had been kept in the dark ; but when it was no longer possible to allow her to remain in ignorance of what was passing in Paris, one of her *femmes rouges*, Madame Durand, who had been left behind in Paris, was implored on the 4th to convey important despatches immediately to her mistress. The devoted attendant obtained a passport, an order for an escort if necessary, and, leaving Paris on the 6th, reached Blois the next day. She brought newspapers and copies of the decrees of the Provisional Government to show to the Empress. "The Empress," she writes, "had been kept in such ignorance that she hardly believed what she read. . . . She was besought and pressed to return to Paris before the arrival of the Bourbon Princes. She was assured of the Regency for herself and the throne for her

son if she took this step—a matter easy enough, as the lady in charge of the despatches had come in a postchaise with only one servant, and without being even obliged to show her passport."

Her conversation with Madame Durand had almost won Marie Louise over to her views, when Dr. Corvisart and the Duchesse de Montebello's opposite advice made her veer round and change her mind. All through this critical time the behaviour of these two intimates of the Empress seems to throw some suspicion on their loyalty to their master's cause. Bausset, too, intriguing underhand for an appointment at the Bourbon Court, and a marquisate, was advising his mistress to return to Austria and finish "sentimental nonsense" by "severing the bonds of a conjugality" which he considered as ended. On this occasion, however, Joseph, Cambacérès, and the Council of Regency added weight to the above counsel, and Marie Louise lost the chance of repairing the error of her flight, even if it was then not too late to do so.

Napoleon sent Colonel Galbois to announce his abdication to the Empress. With the utmost difficulty that officer got through the enemies' lines and reached Blois the same day as Madame Durand.

"I came early to Blois, and the Empress received me at once. The Emperor's abdication surprised her very much. She could not bring herself to believe that the Allied Sovereigns intended to dethrone the Emperor Napoleon.

"'My father,' she said, 'would never allow it; he has told me twenty times, when he placed me on the throne of France, that he would always support me; and my father is an honest man.'

"The Empress wished to be left alone to think over the Emperor's letter. I then went to see the King of Spain and the King of Westphalia. The former was very

much upset ; the latter was very angry with Napoleon. The Empress then sent for me again. She told me that she wished to rejoin the Emperor. I informed her that the thing was impossible. Then her Majesty replied eagerly : ‘ But why ? You are going to him, are you not, *M. le Colonel* ? My place is with the Emperor at a time when he must be very unhappy. I want to rejoin him, and I shall be all right provided I am with him.’

“ I represented to the Empress that I had experienced much difficulty in reaching her. In fact, everything on the journey was dangerous. I had difficulty in persuading her against it ; at last she decided to write to him.

“ I returned safely to the Emperor. Napoleon read the Empress’s letter with avidity ; he seemed much struck with the affectionate interest that the Princess showed him. The Empress spoke of the possibility of collecting 150,000 men ; the Emperor read that part of the letter out to me, and then uttered these remarkable words : ‘ Yes, doubtless I could hold my own, and perhaps with success ; but I should bring about civil war in France, and that I will not do. Besides, I have signed my abdication, and I will not go back on what I have signed.’ ”

On the day that she received Durand and Galbois, Marie Louise held her last Council, and issued the following proclamation :

“IMPERIAL PALACE, BLOIS,  
“April 7, 1814.

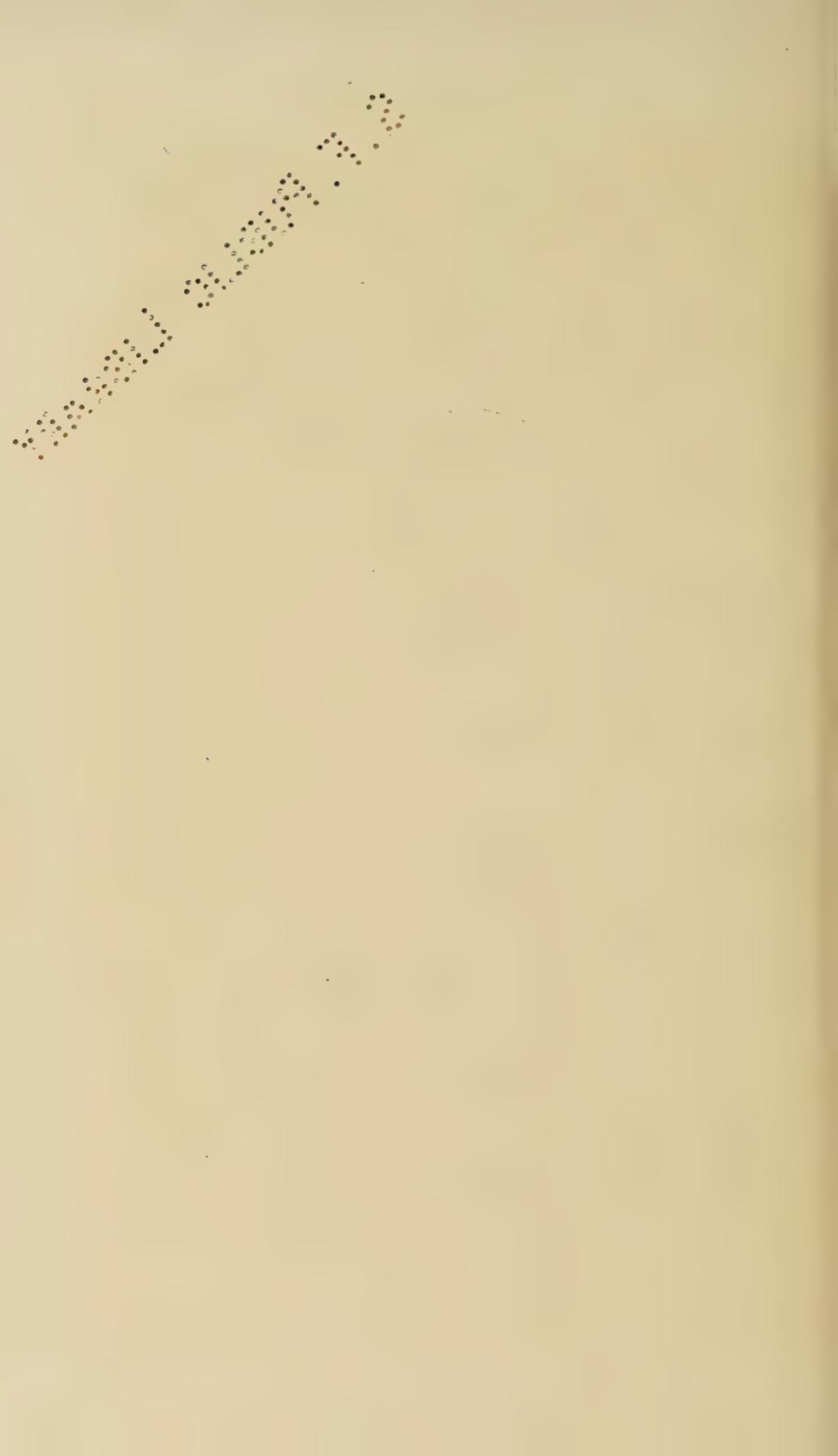
#### “FRENCHMEN !

“ The chances of war have placed the capital in the hands of the enemy. The Emperor, who rushed to defend it, is at the head of his armies, so often victorious ; they are facing the enemy under the walls of Paris. It is from the residence I have chosen, and from the Emperor’s ministers, that will proceed the only orders which you may recognise.



*Alinari, Florence.*

STATUE OF MARIE LOUISE BY CANOVA



"Every city in the power of the enemy ceases to be free ; any orders which emanate from them are those of the foreigner, or are those which it suits his hostile views to propagate.

"You will be faithful to your vows. You will hearken to the voice of a Princess who was confided to your good faith, who glories in being French, and in being associated with the fate of a ruler whom you have freely chosen.

"My son was less sure of your affections in the days of our prosperity. His rights and his person are in your safe-keeping.

"MARIE LOUISE."

This highly coloured version of facts was the only act of the Regent and her Council while at Blois. Its appeal fell utterly flat, because it was not backed up by any armed force.

There is no doubt that, at this moment, Marie Louise had no idea of separating from Napoleon. General Ségur writes : "Madame de Luçay, my mother-in-law, bedchamber woman to the Empress Marie Louise, was a model of conjugal affection. Twice during the Terror she had saved her husband's life, risking her own with a most devoted courage and cleverness. Full of the sweet and gentle virtues which distinguished good society at the end of the eighteenth century, she had just succeeded in persuading the Empress to leave Blois for Fontainebleau. Secrecy was, however, unfortunately indispensable to enable her to carry out such a sacred duty. The carriage ordered to convey her away was standing waiting at the foot of a secret staircase, when another personage, whose malevolent influence had too long and too entirely controlled the Empress's weak mind, suddenly had herself announced. Instantly the Empress, embarrassed by this unexpected incident, hurriedly sent her bedchamber

woman into an adjacent dressing-room. Thence, my mother-in-law was shortly able to hear only too distinctly with what perfidious art the noble and generous decision which she had evoked was hopelessly broken down and altered into the most lamentable defection."

While Marie Louise was thus a prey to conflicting emotions, torn between duty and opportunism, swayed about first by one set of advisers and then by another, a hostage, as it were, to be used alternately by either party of her household, who, however, were chiefly intent on saving their own skins, yet a third faction attempted to secure her for their own ends.

Russian troops were approaching Blois, and it was no longer a safe residence for the fugitive Court. Their vicinity gave an excuse to her brothers-in-law, trembling for their own fate, to suggest that the Empress and her son should retire beyond the Loire, where they proposed to raise the standard of the Napoleonic cause, an act which would have plunged France into the chaos of civil war.

The story of the attempted abduction is told by Madame Durand, who was in waiting in the Empress's private apartments.

At eight o'clock in the morning two carriages drew up at the Préfecture. Kings Joseph and Jérôme entered their sister-in-law's room, shouting :

"‘ Madame, you must come with us ! ’

"‘ I am very well here. Where do you wish to take me ? ’

"‘ That is what we cannot tell you,’ ” replied Jérôme.

She asked if they had Napoleon's orders, and they replied that they had not.

"‘ In that case I shall not go.’ ”

"‘ We will force you to ! ’ ” cried Jérôme.

Marie Louise burst into tears. They seized her by

the waist, and tried to drag her to the door. She screamed for help.

D'Haussonville, the Chamberlain, and General Caffarelli, and Bausset, the *préfet* of the palace, run in. Caffarelli peremptorily tells Joseph and Jérôme to stay their violence, and Marie Louise implores him to see if the guard will protect her.

D'Haussonville runs in such a hurry that he tumbles down the steps into the courtyard, where the officers of the guard are walking about waiting for breakfast. Amid great enthusiasm for the Empress, they swear to defend her. D'Haussonville returns : "The guard is at your Majesty's orders."

Joseph and Jérôme retire silently. They wished to remove the Empress to Bourges, the Auvergnat, or the Limousin as a hostage, and to join the army of Spain. Louis took no part in this scene, being occupied with his Pascal devotions.

Bausset also tells his version of this mysterious incident, which he took care to turn to suit his own ends. For Bausset, like several others, was sitting on a rail.

"At eight o'clock in the morning of April 8 I had betaken myself to the palace of Blois, according to my custom, as much to look after my own department as to get news from the Emperor's headquarters. I was told that the Princes Joseph and Jérôme and Cambacérès had come in, and that they were conferring with the Empress in her drawing-room. The hour was somewhat early for the Empress's habits, and I tried to find out what was going on, when one of her women came to tell me that Her Majesty wished to speak to me at once. I was shown into a room inside her apartments, which opened on one side into her bedroom, and on the other into her drawing-room. Having been informed that I was awaiting her orders, she was pleased to come to me.

I noticed that her appearance was more animated than ordinarily, and that the usually sweet and quiet expression of her face was distinctly changed. From the simple *négligé* of her toilette I concluded that she had just got out of her bed at the moment when the Princes, her brothers-in-law, had asked to speak to her.

“‘M. de Bausset,’ Her Majesty said to me, ‘among the officers of the Emperor’s household who are here, you are my oldest acquaintance, as it dates from Braunau at the time of my marriage. . . . I rely on your fidelity, and I am going to tell you what is going on here. . . . My two brothers-in-law and the Arch-Chancellor are in that drawing-room. They have just told me that I must leave Blois instantly, and that if I do not agree to do so with a good grace they will have me and my son carried into the carriage.’

“‘May I be permitted to inquire what is Your Majesty’s personal wish?’

“‘I wish to remain here and await the Emperor’s letter,’ replied the Empress.

“‘If such is your wish, madame, I dare to reply to Your Majesty that all the officers of the household and of the guard will think as I do, that we have to receive orders from her alone. I ask leave of Your Majesty to go and acquaint them with your intentions.’”

He left the Empress’s apartments, and the first person he met was Comte d’Haussonville, the Chamberlain, and General Caffarelli, the Empress’s aide-de-camp. Very much upset by what he had heard, Bausset hastily told them all.

“‘We mustn’t stand this!’ cried the impetuous d’Haussonville, and as he spoke, he ran in such haste to the portico of the palace that he fell down the steps, shouting to the officers of the guard who were walking about in the courtyard waiting for breakfast.

"All were at once impressed, and gathered round us, agreeing with us, and anxious at once to lay at the Empress's feet the expression of their fidelity."

Bausset begged a servant to inform the Empress and ask for an audience, and acquainted her with the explosion of feeling which had taken place. The Empress asked him to accompany her to the drawing-room and to report to the Princes what he had told her. He told them that, when the officers of the household and the guard had learnt that it was a question of using force to Her Majesty *against her will*, that they had declared they would oppose it, and only take orders from her.

"Tell me the words they used," said King Joseph. "It is necessary for us to know the feeling that actuates them."

"Their words would not be pleasant hearing," replied Bausset; "and besides, the noise I hear in the adjoining room will make Your Majesty better acquainted with them."

"Hardly had I finished speaking when the doors of the drawing-room were violently opened, and all the officers gave vent to the feelings which I had ascribed to them.

"You must remain, madame," said Prince Joseph, with indescribable sweetness. "What I had proposed to Your Majesty seemed to me to suit your interests best. But if she judges otherwise, I repeat, we must remain."

"The Empress in these circumstances," adds Bausset, "acted alone, without consulting her Council, and on her own inspiration."

Thus, and for the second time, did Marie Louise decline to kindle the flame of civil war in France.

Three hours after this scene, Blois was suddenly invaded by a new and weird form of soldier never yet

seen about the old streets of the historic town. In wide blue trousers and tunics and great stiff black leather belts, sitting straight in their high saddles as if standing up to strike with their long lances, a band of Cossacks under Count Schouvaloff, sent by Schwarzenberg, arrived, ostensibly to secure the Empress's safety.

It was the beginning of the end. Henceforth Marie Louise was virtually the prisoner of her husband's enemies.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *IN THE CRUCIBLE*

EVERY diplomatic effort was being made in Paris to prevent Marie Louise from joining Napoleon. The royalists were anxious as to what she would do. They wanted her neither in Paris nor at Elba, where they feared that she might be instrumental in reconciling her husband and her father. The day after Schouvaloff's arrival she arranged to start on the morrow for Orléans and Fontainebleau. But Schouvaloff told Ménéval privately that she was to go to Rambouillet and not to Fontainebleau. By Schouvaloff's arrival the net had been securely flung over her. But it had been flung further afield than she realised.

Though the Kaiser, for decency's sake, had advanced personally no farther on Paris than Dijon, so as not to appear to bring about his daughter's ruin, Schwarzenberg, his Commander-in-Chief, was in Paris, and through him Franz was in thrall to the Allies. But his own wife was helping to tighten the net over her unhappy step-daughter. We know how she hated Napoleon, we have seen how jealousy made her extend that hatred to his wife. Schwarzenberg had won over the Duchesse, Corvisart the doctor, and most of the few intimates who possessed the Empress's confidence. Champagny, writes Madame Durand, carried to Schwarzenberg news of her wish to rejoin her husband.

For Marie Louise was struggling in the meshes.

"When she heard," writes the son of her chamberlain, d'Haussonville, "that Napoleon had been given the kingdom of Elba, she inquired about her new abode. She sent for Madame de Brignole, one of her ladies who was a Genoese, and had lived for some time in the island, and asked all sorts of questions about the climate, the inhabitants, the resources. She did not seem to imagine for a moment that she could have any other place of residence than that of her husband, or any future but his. Her tone was not only what was proper with reference to Napoleon, but even lofty. . . . My father was convinced that she was speaking in good faith and did not contemplate separating her fortunes from him whom she has since so completely forgotten!"

"Every one," writes Madame Durand, "advised Marie Louise not to rejoin Napoleon, except one who said to her: 'I am perhaps the only person who is not betraying you!'"

On the same day as her brother-in-laws' attempt, the same day that the Cossacks closed around her, the unhappy Empress made yet another tentative to follow her duty and her inclination. Mindful of Bausset's loyal assistance in the emergency of the early morning, she sent for him again before dinner.

"'Will you do me yet another service?' said the Princess, with such a touching charm that I was quite moved by it.

"'Command me, madame, and I answer for myself.'

"'Very well. You will leave to-night for Paris. You will doubtless find there the Emperor, my father, and you will give him the letter I am about to write. You will then betake yourself to Fontainebleau with another letter for the Emperor Napoleon. I hope, on my part, to go there myself, for I ought, and I wish, to be beside him.'

Make your arrangements and come at eight o'clock this evening to fetch my despatches.' "

Bausset left Blois at 11 a.m., having heard privately from Schouvaloff that the Empress would not be allowed to go to Fontainebleau. Passing safely through the lines of the enemy round Paris, he reached the city at 2 a.m. to find his rooms occupied by Russian officers and privates.

In the morning he went to Schwarzenberg's house and saw Metternich and Castlereagh drive up to it in a post-chaise—the first meeting of the three heads of the Allies. Amid the crowd in Schwarzenberg's rooms Metternich spied him, for Bausset had a commanding figure—"the only one of us," said Napoleon, "who did not grow any thinner during the Russian campaign." He came up to inquire after the Empress's health. Bausset begged for permission to get her letter through to her father. Metternich asked for it, saying that, as the Kaiser was still at Troyes, it would save time if he saw it. Bausset declined to give it up. Metternich told him that he was wrong, for that very evening the ministers of Napoleon and those of the Allies were about to settle the fate of the Imperial family, and that the Empress's letter might influence the Czar favourably.

Whereupon Bausset went to Caulaincourt, Napoleon's minister of Foreign Affairs, and asked leave to show Metternich the letter. Caulaincourt gave permission, and Metternich, after perusing it, was of opinion it might have a good effect, and told Bausset to return at eleven p.m. to hear the result of the diplomatic conference.

Bausset then went on to Talleyrand and saw something of that statesman's change of coat, and also of the mutations of several other officials in whose loyalty he had trusted. At the hour appointed he came back to Schwarzenberg's house and Metternich came up to him

and informed him that Napoleon had abdicated, accepting the sovereignty of the island of Elba, but retaining his title, and that the King of Rome was to be Prince of Parma and his mother's heir.

"I left for Fontainebleau," writes Bausset, "at two in the morning. It was nine o'clock when I reached the palace. I was at once shown in to the Emperor, to whom I presented the Empress's letter.

"'Good Louise!' he said, after perusing it. He thereupon asked me many questions about her health, and that of his son. I begged him to honour me with a reply, and expressed to him my wish to carry back with me this comfort to the Empress, whose heart needed it so much.

"'Stay here to-day, and to-morrow I will give you my letter.'

"I found Napoleon calm, quiet, and confident. His soul was strongly tempered. Never, perhaps, had he seemed to me so great. I talked to him about the island of Elba ; he already knew that this little principality would be given to him. He pointed out to me on the table a geographical and statistical book which contained all the details he wished to ascertain about his residence.

"'The climate is healthy,' he said to me, 'and the natives are excellent. I shall not be so badly off there, and I hope Marie Louise will not think herself so badly off either.'

"He was not aware of the obstacles which had just been placed to their reunion at the palace of Fontainebleau, but he flattered himself that, once in possession of the Duchy of Parma, the Empress would be allowed to come with her son, and settle herself with him in the island of Elba. . . . He flattered himself! He was never again to see these objects of his most tender affection. . . ."

At two o'clock the Emperor, walking alone on the terrace in front of the Galerie François II., sent again for Bausset to question him about the events he had seen.

"He was far from approving the decision which had been taken of making the Empress quit Paris. I spoke to him of the letters to his brother Joseph.

"The circumstances were no longer the same," he replied. "It was necessary to decide according to the new circumstances. The mere presence of Louise in Paris would have been sufficient to prevent or hinder the treachery and defection of some of my troops. I should still be at the head of a redoubtable army, with which I should have forced the enemy to evacuate Paris and to sign an honourable peace."

The interview lasted for two hours. A day or two before the rumour ran that Napoleon had attempted suicide, but now he said to Bausset, with a sigh: "I am a man condemned to live!"

A few more turns on the terrace followed, in deep, sad silence. "Between ourselves," added the Emperor, with a bitter smile, "they say a live gudgeon is worth more than a dead Emperor!"

With the arrival at Blois of Schouvaloff and his Cossacks the rats began to leave the sinking ship. He put up at the inn of La Galère, and all the rest of the day it was crowded with people flocking to have their passports *visé*. All the principal members of her Council and of her household left the Empress—Regent she was no longer.

One after another she received those who came to say farewell. Yet even at this harassing moment her natural generosity and kindness did not forsake her. She gave away no less than £12,000 to her household, Court, and domestics, before leaving for Orléans; but

she appeared too stunned by her calamities to be really astonished at the falling away around her.

Another night, that of April 8, was again spent in packing, like the fateful last night in Paris only twelve days ago. How much had happened since then!

Ménéval spent the time in burning the family papers and despatches which Napoleon had ordered him to carry away from the Tuileries. Very early on the 8th he came to the Empress's rooms and found her very uneasy about her own jewels and the crown diamonds; for the Queen of Westphalia, in travelling from Paris, had been robbed of her jewels and money, and Marie Louise knew that she would have to pass through Cossack outposts.

She sent for the diamonds and decided, for safety, to wear them herself; but there arose a dilemma over the famous Pitt Diamond. This gem, brought from India by Chatham's grandfather, had been bought by the Regent Philippe Égalité, but had gone astray during the Revolution. When found by the Imperial Government, Napoleon had had the great diamond set in the hilt of the Sword of State. To carry this weapon about with her without its attracting notice was out of the question. The idea struck Marie Louise that, in order to secrete it, Ménéval might separate the hilt from the blade. Not having any tool at hand with which to do this, he proceeded to snap it off over one of the firedogs in the Empress's fireplace, and then fearfully hid the precious blade under his coat.

This done, the Empress had a hurried breakfast, alone with the Duchesse de Montebello, as was usually the case. A hard-hearted remark dropped by the latter showed the real feeling of this treacherous friend towards the unhappy mistress who placed so much trust in her.

"How I long for this all to end!" exclaimed Madame de Montebello. "How I wish to be quietly

t home with my children in my little house Rue l'Enfer!"

"What you tell me, Duchesse, is very cruel!" replied poor Marie Louise, tears in her eyes. But she made no other reproach.

The Duchesse went on to inform her that on no account should she, the Duchesse, go to Elba; and indeed, as we have seen, she was taking steps to prevent her mistress going there, and thus to avoid having to follow her thither.

The Empress, with her accompanying Kings and Queens, Madame Mère, and a sadly thinned retinue, left Blois, passing through rows of sad and silent spectators, and escorted by the troops of the Imperial Guard. At Augerville, however, the procession was suddenly surrounded by four thousand Cossacks, whose ferocious attitude spread consternation till it was discovered that they were sent by Schouvaloff, ostensibly as an additional escort. But their presence belied his words, for it showed plainly that he had orders to cut off any communication with Fontainebleau, and to prevent any attempt on the part of the Empress to rejoin Napoleon.

The first part of the journey was performed in safety; but at Beaugency the Cossacks lived up to the character they had earned during their advance through Eastern France, for the rearguard fell upon some of the hindmost carriages and pillaged the ladies' hats and caps, and only the appearance of Schouvaloff's aide-de-camp restored order and made them disgorge the articles they had taken.

Orléans was neither Imperialist nor Royalist. On Easter Day the *Domum salvum fac imperatorum* was not sung in the cathedral; but neither was the *Domum salvum fac regem*. The city was crowded with troops of every kind without leaders, and with leaders without troops.

The Duc de Rovigo regretted that these had not been swept together to add to the defence of Paris.

The gates were barricaded, and guns were mounted on the ramparts. The Empress, at her entry, was still received as a sovereign. The garrison and the National Guard lined the streets, and the crowd cheered her : “Vive l’Empereur ! Vive l’Impératrice !” The civil and military authorities received her and conducted her to the palace of the Bishop, where she stayed. All night long, beneath her windows, rang these familiar cheers for the last time !

Next day the little King of Rome, dressed in blue velvet and a peaked black velvet cap, might have been seen in the courtyard of the palace, playing at a review, with a bayonet stuck in the ground, and waving a sword. The Comtesse de Montesquiou allowed the passers-by to come into the courtyard and see him.

At Orléans the Duc de Cadore met the Empress with the reply to the letter she had sent by him to the Kaiser, and which he had only delivered after a long chase, for Franz, for appearance’ sake, was “lying low” at Dijon. This reply gave Marie Louise cold comfort. It was evasive, for, while protesting his good-will and affection, her father doubted if the Allies shared his zeal for the interests and rights of his daughter.

To add to the depression caused by this letter, the Comte de Saint Aulaire came bringing her another from the Kaiser which told her of the Emperor’s attempt at suicide. With reference to his reception by the Empress Saint Aulaire tells a story which is not so incredible as might appear at first blush. He was admitted, he says, to her presence in a hurry, early in the morning, to find Marie Louise half out of bed, a bare foot peeping from beneath the bedclothes.

Oppressed with the grave news he brought, Saint

Aulaire dared not look her in the face as he told it, anxious not to increase her trouble. He bent his eyes on the ground, and the Empress, he says, thinking he was looking at her foot, remarked : "I am always told I have a pretty foot!"

Marie Louise's detractors quote this anecdote as a mark of her heartlessness and frivolity. But she was no coquette, at all events not in those days, and many who have gone through moments of great mental strain can remember how often, under such circumstances, the mind seems stunned, as it were, unable to grasp anything but irrelevant or trivial details. When we consider what Marie Louise had undergone during the last few weeks, we can well imagine what a paralysing effect this news of the despair to which Napoleon was reduced must have had upon her. The result was the very natural one of increasing her overmastering desire to rejoin him.

"Escaping from advice out of tune with the thoughts which obsessed her, she rushed, half-dressed, out of her dressing-room across a balcony which separated her room from that of her son, and, throwing herself into the arms of Madame de Montesquiou, whom she so much respected, she fortified herself in her resolve to go to Fontainebleau. She even ordered preparations to be made for her departure, and Montesquiou and Durand backed up her decision."

But the opposition, in the shape of the Duchesse, won the day. She was jealous of the noble-minded Comtesse de Montesquiou, whose devotion increased with misfortune, and who offered to follow her precious charge to Elba. Marie Louise was pointed out the difficulties and dangers of the journey, and persuaded to await Bausset's return with the replies to the letters.

A letter which now arrived from Metternich supported Montebello. He wrote that the Empress would soon

hear that her father was doing his best for her ; he told her that she was eventually to be an independent ruler, but that, for the present, she had better retire to Austria and choose between Napoleon and her own establishment. He added that her father was but too willing to help to dry the tears she had only too much reason to shed—that, for the time being, she would be quiet and free in Austria, and that she could take with her those in whom she had most confidence. Two Austrian noblemen with whom she was well acquainted, Prince Paul Esterházy and Prince Wenzel Lichtenstein, were ordered to escort her to Rambouillet to her father.

All this Marie Louise passed on to Napoleon, deplored the haste with which her fate was being decided, and adding : “ I live but in tears ! ”

From Orléans Ménéval maintained a regular correspondence two or three times a day with Baron Fain, who had replaced him as private secretary with Napoleon. The latter repeatedly inquired if Marie Louise’s intention was to join him, or her father, or if she wished to go to her own States, which latter plan seemed to appeal to him most. His wishes were that his wife and child should join him at Briare, and that they should travel together by the Mont Cenis to Parma, where Marie Louise could rest while he went on to Elba to prepare to receive her there. He was particularly anxious as to who would have charge of the King of Rome, suggesting that Madame de Bombers be asked to undertake the post if the Comtesse de Montesquiou wished to return to Paris—an idea which the devoted “ Maman ’Quiou ” indignantly repelled. He gave elaborate instructions as to the Empress’s household and journey.

This affectionate consideration only distraught Marie Louise still more.

“ I am really very much to be pitied,” she said to

Rovigo. "Some advise me to go, others to remain. I write to the Emperor and he does not give a direct reply to what I ask. He tells me to write to my father. Ah ! my father ! What will he say to me after the affronts which he has allowed to be heaped upon me ? I am abandoned, and I fling myself upon Providence ! God indeed inspired me wisely when He imbued me with the idea of becoming a canoness. I should have done much better than to have come to this country ! . . . To go to the Emperor. . . . But I cannot leave without my son, whose guardian I am. . . . On the other hand, if the Emperor fears an attempt upon his life, as is probable, and if he should be obliged to escape, the burden I should be to him might cause him to fall into his enemies' hands, who, there is no manner of doubt, desire his ruin. I don't know what to decide ! I only live in tears." And, indeed her face was bathed. Then she spoke of her father, whose abandonment seemed so cruel, adding, with a touching humbleness : "I understand that the people of this country dislike me, and yet it is not my fault. But why did my father have me married if he had the projects he is now carrying out ? "

Napoleon, through Fain, sent orders and arrangements with respect to the disposal of the household, the treasure, and the sums that were to be given to his family, now entirely dependent on him. The ministers and officials took what was owing to them, the troops were paid up, and £40,000 sent to Napoleon for his journey.

But the Provisional Government wanted money, and swooped down upon the Empress at Orléans in the shape of a vulgar personage, one Dudon, *maitre des requêtes*, who rummaged in the carriages and everywhere, seizing everything he could lay hands on, on the pretext that it was the Emperor's. For, when the Provisional Government sent to the Tuilleries on April 7, they

found the treasury chests empty, the inventory books vanished, and the strong boxes which had contained the crown diamonds had nothing in them. All had been carried off. Now they had received information of the whereabouts of the treasure, and sent to seize it.

Dudon laid hold of what he could find of the £700,000, which were the Emperor's own private savings, as well as his personal jewelry and linen—even his handkerchiefs marked "N." He took likewise the Empress's plate and dinner-service, leaving her not a knife or fork or plate to eat with, and Marie Louise had to borrow from the Bishop, her host, before she could dine.

She was quite innocent of the pillage of the forty million francs with which she had reached Blois. She had kept very little for herself, except what she had already spent when the treasure was taken from her. The diplomatic corps in Paris had their share of the spoil—Metternich, Talleyrand, Castlereagh, Wellington. Metternich likewise secured £4,000 for his friend, the Queen of Naples, who had already been paid up by Napoleon along with his other brothers and sisters.

Dudon now demanded the crown jewels. In discussing them with the lady-in-waiting who had charge of them, he asked for a certain necklace, a single row of diamonds, worth £200,000, which Napoleon had given the Empress after the birth of the King of Rome. The official in charge of the Imperial Treasury had never claimed this as crown property, but Dudon did. At that moment the necklace in question was on Marie Louise's own neck. The lady went to her in the drawing-room, where many people were surrounding her; at the first word of explanation Marie Louise tore off the necklace, exclaiming: "Give it back, and say no more about the matter!"

All the crown diamonds were restored, and were

found to be correct according to the inventory, except the "Regent." Then there was a hue and cry for the great gem, for no one, of course, except the Empress and Ménéval, knew where it was. At last it came to her ears that it was being asked for. She quietly took it out of her work-bag and gave it up.

Along with the crown jewels went all Marie Louise's personal jewelry. In vain her household expostulated and appealed to Schouvaloff; he would not interfere. This incident of the jewels reflects but little credit upon the Provisional Government.

The extra carriages now no longer required were sent to Tours, the coronation coach to Chambord.

After Mass on Monday, with a face bathed in tears, the Empress received at the same time the adieux of the remaining courtiers who had stayed with her, and their congratulations on being made Duchess of Parma. The following day she found herself, with her boy, almost alone in the Bishop's palace, save for Ménéval and two or three ladies, including the Duchesse, who longed for peace and quiet. She also, that evening, bade a farewell, that in many cases was a final one, to her husband's family, who were hurriedly dispersing to various havens of refuge across the frontier.

Bausset left Fontainebleau that night and reached Orléans twelve hours later. He informed the Empress that he had carried out her orders, and gave her Napoleon's reply. She approved of his having shown Metternich her letter to her father.

On the 12th she sent off by Isabey, to Napoleon, a portrait of herself and the King of Rome. On bidding the painter farewell she gave him some of her own sketches and a little note-book bound in morocco, with corners and clasps of chased gold, and wrote in her own hand on the first page: "Given to Isabey April 20,

1814, by one of his pupils, who will always be grateful for the trouble he has taken about her. Louise."

On April 11, Marie Louise, with her sadly attenuated train, left Orléans. His grandmother clasped the little King in her arms. Before getting into the carriage, Marie Louise turned to the old lady: "Madame, I hope you will always retain the kind feelings with which you have hitherto honoured me." "That will depend on yourself," replied the somewhat 'dour' Letætia, "and upon your conduct in the future!" The Empress travelled under the escort of Schouvaloff and of her own cavalry of the Imperial Guard. But at Augerville these were suddenly replaced by Cossacks "brandishing their long spears around us as if we were a convoy of prisoners," writes Bausset.

Napoleon, no longer contemplating suicide, but longing for his wife and son, and mindful that Marie Louise had written dreading the insecurity of the roads, sent General Cambronne and two battalions of the Guards to fetch her to Fontainebleau. General Cambronne reached Orléans on the 13th—two days too late!

Wearied out in mind and body Marie Louise drove into the gates of Rambouillet between Russian sentries, only to find that she had been hurried thither needlessly. The Kaiser was not expected there yet!

Though tired to death, she wrote to her father before going to bed: "This cause alone [the wish to see him after such a long separation] has made me decide to come here, and prevented my going at once join the Emperor at Fontainebleau."

She spent three days, a veritable prisoner, now pacing up and down her rooms in feverish impatience, now sitting motionless and crushed, weeping floods of tears. Queen Hortense came to see her from Malmaison, where she had taken refuge with her mother, but brought no

comfort. Marie Louise perceived that Josephine's daughter already looked with suspicion upon her for not having rejoined Napoleon.

On the 16th Franz drove into Rambouillet in a plain open chaise. He was attended only by Metternich, come to rivet the fetters he had forged. The Empress, with her boy and her few followers, met him in the courtyard on the last step. Marie Louise, at sight of her father, burst into tears, and, before she kissed him, took the child from Madame de Montesquiou and almost threw him into his grandfather's arms. Franz, deeply moved, clasped the grandson whom he now saw for the first time.

The Empress barely took time to present her household, and father and daughter passed quickly into her private rooms. The Kaiser was as distressed as was Marie Louise. The King of Rome was taken back to his nursery. A very quick child for his age, the vicissitudes of the last few weeks had greatly sharpened his intellect. To Ménéval he had accused Louis XVIII. of having "taken the place of Papa," Blücher of being his greatest enemy, and both of having taken away his toys. His grandfather's long, pale, solemn face did not impress the King of Rome. "I've now seen the Emperor of Austria," he remarked to "Maman 'Quiou,'" "and he is not handsome!"

Long were father and daughter closeted together, in tears. "As my daughter," he said to her, "all I have is yours—my blood, my life! As a sovereign, I do not know you!"

He sent for the little King again, and, looking lovingly at him, remarked that he resembled his mother. "It is indeed my blood that flows in his veins."

When they were again alone together, the urgent question of Marie Louise's destination was discussed. She said that she would prefer to stay in Italy and await

the moment to rejoin Napoleon ; that Corvisart had ordered her the waters of Aix-les-Bains, but that the other doctors did not agree with him. Not admitting any possibility of a long separation, she wished to divide her time between Parma and Elba.

But Franz had promised Metternich to steel himself, and not to yield ; he insisted upon a return to Schönbrunn, at all events temporarily. To the Allies he had ejaculated : "God grant that Napoleon be sent far off !" and Elba he thought too near. "Austria is without bowels !" Napoleon had said to Caulaincourt.

Franz told his daughter that he had been made the guardian of his grandson, who was to succeed to Elba, but at his death it was to return to Tuscany. All this discussion was terribly painful to poor broken-down Marie Louise, who, writes her secretary, would now and again retire to her room, and sitting, "her elbows on her knees, her head in her hands, give way to the bitterness of her thoughts and abundant tears."

From Rambouillet the Kaiser wrote an oily, treacherous letter to "the Emperor," his "dear son-in-law, informing him that the Empress's health had suffered exceedingly, and that he had therefore suggested to her to spend some months in the bosom of her family." Napoleon, he thought, was too considerate of her happiness not to agree. "When recovered, she could go to her own States, near Your Majesty. It is superfluous to say that her son will form part of my family, and that I will share his mother's care of him while with me."

The Kaiser stayed at Rambouillet that night and till late next evening. When he left an Austrian guard replaced the Russian, and Marie Louise had agreed to go to Vienna !

Meanwhile, two loving and faithful women had been to Fontainebleau, each imploring leave to go with Napoleon

to Elba. One was Mlle Georges, the actress, the early love of his consular days, the other, the Comtesse Walewski, the beautiful blonde Pole he had known and loved in Warsaw, the mother of his son, waited on that pouring night of April 11 in an antechamber. Napoleon declined to see either of them !

With a refinement of cruelty Marie Louise's other two captors came down to Rambouillet to gloat over their victim. The first was the Czar, inviting himself to *déjeuner* on the 15th. "Le roi galant's" visit was doubtless not entirely actuated by political motives ; he was probably curious to see the handsome young woman who had secured such a lasting hold on Napoleon's affections. Alexander was now five-and-thirty, "but looked younger, was tall, well made, good-looking, with a gentle, yet imposing manner." Bausset relates that he was so pleasant "that we could hardly believe what had passed in Paris."

The Czar apologized for his visit as being paid at the Kaiser's desire, and he proffered sympathy and devotion. Marie Louise was cold, but polite ; she did not at all want to see him, blaming him for all her troubles, and unaware that, but for him, Napoleon would have been sent to the Azores. Alexander, on his side, "could read in her face, which for the last twenty days had been watered with tears, the effect his presence produced." He did not know that she was aware of all that had gone on in Paris both before and after his reception of the Marshals ; but "she knew all that had been planned against her husband, and must indeed have been thoroughly mistress of herself to keep her countenance in front of the author of all the miseries which overwhelmed her."

After breakfast Alexander asked to see the boy : "M. de Bausset, will you conduct me to the King of Rome ?"

"Having sent to inform Madame de Montesquiou, I preceded him to his Majesty's apartments. He kissed and caressed and examined the beautiful child, and said some flattering things to Madame de Montesquiou."

Next day appeared another inquisitive, and much less agreeable visitor, his Majesty of Prussia, alone with an aide-de-camp. Happily he did not inflict Marie Louise with his presence at any meal ; but, though not so genial as the fascinating Alexander, he too asked to see the little King, and kissed him.

Queen Hortense came down to Rambouillet to see Marie Louise : "but, as I was an embarrassment rather than a consolation to the Empress, I left her."

The devoted young wife of Lord Burghersh, British military attaché to the allied armies, who had just accompanied her husband through the hardships and perils of the campaign, was now with him in Paris. Lord Burghersh had been appointed to attend Napoleon to Elba. "It will be just like guarding a wild beast," writes his wife ; but he declined, on finding that he would be expected to remain in the island. "To-day," writes Lady Burghersh to her mother, "Prince Esterházy and Wenzel Lichtenstein returned from Fontainebleau (*sic*) where they had been sent by the Emperor of Austria to Marie Louise. They dined with us to-day, and gave me an account of her. She cried very much, but consented to leave Napoleon, for which I think she is a monster, for she certainly pretended to love him, and he always behaved well to her. She said she would not see him before he goes, for if she saw him, and that he asked her to come with him, she knew she could not refuse him ; but that to obey her father, and for the good of her child, she agreed to go to Vienna. She showed them the King of Rome, and they say he is the most beautiful child they ever saw. She is to have the Duchy of Parma and

Guastalla. I think it quite disgusting in her to abandon him in his misfortunes, after pretending at least to idolize him."

In after-years, in Italy, Lady Burghersh became one of Marie Louise's greatest friends, and much modified her opinion about her. "The Empress told her how, before Napoleon left for the last campaign, he enjoined his wife to be guided in everything by his brother Joseph; and it was in consequence of this order that she obeyed Joseph's advice to leave Paris, though her own wish was to remain there; and she believed that, had she done so, better terms could have been made for her and her son. When the catastrophe came she was undoubtedly the victim of cruel deceptions. She wished to join Napoleon at Elba, but was put off on various pretexts."

When Napoleon heard of these visits of the Czar and the Prussian King he was much annoyed, and thought they both showed very bad taste. He still hoped and trusted his wife would rejoin him; but, as soon as he heard that she had seen her father at Rambouillet, he realized that she was no longer a free agent—the victim, not the accomplice, of the coalition. The day before he started for Elba, at the moment when she was receiving the Czar's unwelcome politeness, he wrote her a most affectionate letter. It shows that he was unaware that Corvisart was one of those working to separate them. The latter, against the opinion of all the other doctors, was insisting upon a "cure" at Aix:

"MA BONNE LOUISE,

"I have received your letter, which shows me of all your troubles, which increase mine. I am pleased to see that Corvisart cheers you. I am infinitely obliged to him; he justifies by this noble conduct the good

opinion I have always had of him. Tell him so from me, and ask him to send me frequently a little report of your health. Try to go at once to the waters of Aix, which I hear Corvisart has ordered for you. Get well, keep your health for me, and for your son, who needs your care. I am starting for the island of Elba, whence I will write to you. I will do everything to get ready to receive you. Write to me often. Address your letters to the Viceroy, your uncle, if, as they say, he is made Grand-duke of Tuscany. Adieu, *ma bonne Louise.*"

Next day, on the morning of his early departure, he wrote again :

"**MA BONNE AMIE,**

"I am off to-night to sleep at Brienne. I shall leave to-morrow morning, and not stop again till S. Tropez. Bausset, who will bring you this letter, will give you my news, and will tell you that I am well. I hope your health will soon improve, and that you will come and join me. Montesquiou, who left at two o'clock this morning, should have arrived. I had no news of you yesterday, but I hope that the *préfet du palais* will rejoin me this evening and give me some. Adieu, *ma bonne Louise.* You can always count upon the courage, the calmness, and the affection of your husband Napoleon. A kiss to the little King."

On writing this he remarked to Caulaincourt : "Providence has willed it—I shall live. Beside, my wife and my son are enough for me. I shall see them ; I hope I shall see them often. When they are sure that I do not want to leave my retreat, they will allow me to receive them, perhaps to visit them."

When Napoleon knew that the Empress was at

Rambouillet, he quite understood that she was no longer her own mistress. He told Fain to send her his notes on Elba "if it would interest her," and Fain added to Ménéval that letters must be sent via the Viceroy of Lombardy, or the King of Naples, by Genoa or Livorno. On the day before the Emperor left Fain sent the itinerary of his journey, asking for news at Brienne and at S. Tropez, where he was to sleep, and begging Ménéval to write at every opportunity.

From Fréjus wrote General Bertrand, who had accompanied Napoleon. His letter shows the regard which Napoleon's intimates had for Marie Louise. After describing the Emperor's sad journey : " You can well believe how much we wish that the Empress should divide her time between Parma and Elba ; we should be so happy to see her sometimes ; she has been so kind to my wife and me, that no one can desire it more heartily than myself. Please to lay at her feet the homage of my respectful devotion."

During his last conversation with faithful Caulaincourt, Napoleon, in talking over his separation from his wife, remarked : " Instead of the court of France as I have made it, to offer her a prison is a great trial. If she came to me with a sad or bored face I should be terribly sorry about it. I prefer solitude to a vision of melancholy and ennui. If her own inclination sends her to me, I shall receive her with open arms. Otherwise let her stay at Parma or Florence, where, at least, she will reign. I shall only require of her my son. . . . I know her ; she is weak and frivolous. My dear Caulaincourt, Cæsar may become a mere citizen, but his wife can with difficulty cease to be the wife of Cæsar."

He regretted to Caulaincourt that the Allies had not given Marie Louise Tuscany. " She would only

have had to cross the Piombino channels to see me. My prison would have been, as it were, surrounded by her States, and under these circumstances I could have hoped to see her. I would even have gone to visit her, and, when they saw that I had given up the world, and that like a new Sancho, I thought only of the happiness of my island, they would have allowed me those little journeys."

There is no doubt, that, at the time Napoleon left for Elba, if Marie Louise had been in the faintest degree encouraged by her father, she would have gone thither with him. At St. Helena he himself said that Marie Louise was innocence itself and that she loved him. "Had she not been influenced by that *canaille*, Madame de Montebello, and Corvisart, who was a *miserable*, she would have followed me to Elba."

When Napoleon sent Caulaincourt to see her, she told him as much. She gave him loving messages for her husband, renewed her vows of loyalty and fidelity, and swore to bring him back his son. But, added to her bias towards her father's wishes, was also a feeling that she might be an incubus to Napoleon on his journey, of which she exaggerated the possible difficulties and dangers for herself and her child.

But the whole key to her attitude is probably her physical as much as mental or moral weakness. We have seen how completely the unexpected overthrow of the Empire had told on Marie Louise's health and nerves. We have seen how she was broken down by the mental anxiety which had so suddenly broken in upon a rather superficial existence of unclouded happiness and pleasure. The sharp contrast would have tried a stronger character, a more level head. Add to all this the fatiguing journeys over the bad roads in the heavy spring rains, the very early starts, the late arrivals, the want of sleep ; she was

physically worn out. When she left Rambouillet on April 23 even the short drive to Grosbois tried her so that she was quite ill, and had to rest there for two days.

The Duchesse d'Angoulême had most considerately written to the Kaiser offering to provide for the Empress's household and servants left at Paris. Marie Louise sent her one woman and four men. Madame Durand, who was left in France, obtained a pension for herself and a scholarship for her son at the College Henri.

The Prince of Wagram and Neufchâtel had given up his château of Grosbois for the reception of the Empress, and had retired with his family to the neighbouring château of Marolles. Sent to fetch Marie Louise from Vienna as a bride, he was the last to bid her adieu as she left France, practically widowed.

The Comtesse de Montesquiou's son Anatole, Napoleon's Grand Chamberlain, was awaiting the Empress at Grosbois, and the Kaiser came and spent the day with her. In the evening Wagram went over to present her suite to the Kaiser, and Marie Louise bade farewell to those she was not taking with her. "She carried with her the regrets of all who had had the happiness of approaching her, and left among us the memory of all the virtues."

On the 25th the Empress started for Austria. Her suite consisted only of the Duchesse de Montebello, the Comtesse Brignole, General Caffarelli, Comte de S. Aignan, the Baron de Ménéval and M. de Bausset, Dr. Corvisart and a surgeon. The King of Rome had with him the Comtesse de Montesquiou, Mesdames Rabusson and Soufflot, the latter's daughter Fanny, Madame Marchand, and his nurses. General Kinsky commanded the Austrian escort.

Marie Louise followed the same route by which the

Allies had reached Paris, and through departments where, four years previously, arches of triumph had been raised to greet her arrival. The state of the country was indescribably dreadful, showing terrible traces of the recent war. Camps of Cossacks and Austrians were passed between Grosbois and Provins. Devastation was widespread; villages were ravaged and blackened. At Nogent only two houses stood intact. Crowds of loose cavalry-horses roamed the fields, trampling the growing corn.

"Her heart was torn during this sad journey; every thing was bitter to her. She only found a little distraction when her eyes no longer rested on scenes connected with her misfortunes."

Staying the night at Provins, Marie Louise wrote a few lines to Napoleon, which he received on landing at Porto Ferrajo. She slept at Troyes at the house of Mesgrègny, father of one of the Emperor's equerries; next she stopped at Châtillon, and then at Dijon, where she was received by the Austrian governor of Burgundy and his troops, presenting arms. He had actually ordered a salute of guns and illuminations! But they were so little in keeping with her state of mind that she had them countermanded.

Sleeping at Gray, Vesoule, and Belfort, on May 2 Marie Louise crossed the Rhine between Hunningen and Basle, and left France for ever.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *AT HOME ONCE MORE*

SWITZERLAND in May! What an exhilarating effect on health and spirits at two-and-twenty!

From the moment she crossed the Rhine a change came over the journey of the Empress. All traces of war and of sad memories seemed left behind. A change, too, was apparent in the way in which she was received. She was no longer the wife of a dethroned Sovereign flying from her conquered country, but the proud daughter of a great ruler returning to her father's capital and the home of her childhood. "Our march," writes her *préfet du palais*, "had more the aspect of a triumph than a fête, and one would have thought, perhaps with reason, that Austria, compelled awhile to lend a beloved daughter, was celebrating her return as a conquest. All the rulers of Baden, Würtemberg, Bavaria, whose frontiers we crossed, sent deputations of the great officers of their Courts; nothing but triumphal arches were wanting to make us fancy that we were still in the loyal, submissive territory of Napoleon's Confederation of the Rhine."

In the late afternoon Marie Louise's procession of twenty-four carriages entered Basle between lines of Austrian, Swiss, and Bavarian troops, and she was received with a sovereign's honours. A day she stayed at Basle to rest the King of Rome. The boy was tired with the excitement of the long journey, in which he took

a great interest, little realizing that it was the longest journey that he would ever make. He travelled with his *gouvernante*, and only saw his mother at the stopping-places. Her detractors have noted as a want of maternal affection in Marie Louise, that she did not seek comfort in her child's company. But surely for her, in her present state of health, to be shut up for hours in the close quarters of a travelling berline, with a very vivacious and inquisitive boy, was too fatiguing. The little king was very happy and amused, with his "Maman 'Quiou'"; but one day he suddenly asked, "Why will they not let me kiss Papa any more?" He asked ceaseless questions, "always standing at the carriage window, returning salutes of passers-by, and much noticed for his charming manners."

Hiding from the noisy, cheering crowd, the Empress put up at the house of Senator Winker, and received only Kinsky and the Austrian Chamberlains, Wrbna and Tosi, driving out to Aldersheim to see the scenery.

"The Empress is pretty well," wrote Ménéval to his wife the day after their arrival at Basle," and bears her situation with more calmness than she would, I think, if she realized its full significance. She is much flattered. I warn her against pitfalls. She promises to be firm, and not to allow herself to be put upon ; but I dread her unhappy easy-goingness and that habit of passiveness with which her upbringing has imbued her. Perhaps, also, I am led away by the illusion that they would be very glad to keep her all her life in Austria, and to seize in her name a territory which would give her a shadow of sovereignty and more facilities for approaching her husband and receiving his advice, which *they dread above everything*. I shall see, on my arrival at Vienna and during the first days of her stay there, what is to be hoped or feared in that respect."

At Basle Napoleon's last letter before embarking for Elba reached Marie Louise, awaking in her "a secret grief, a sort of remorse," writes Ménéval, "which was often evident in spite of the great efforts she made not to show anything." She reached the little "Crown" inn at Schaffhausen late in the evening of the 4th, almost at the same moment that he landed at Porto Ferrajo. After staying a day there to see the falls, both from the banks and also from the opposite heights of Schloss Lauffen, she went on to Zürich, where she made her incognito an excuse for not receiving visits from the diplomatic officials of Austria, Bavaria, and Russia, and went for a row on the lake. From Zürich she wrote to her father on the text of Napoleon's last letter :

"At Basle I had the comfort of receiving news of the Emperor. He is well, but he is very sad at the way he has been received in Provence. He has also other business which I would like to speak to you about. You know how repugnant it is to me to speak of money matters ; but I think it is my duty, as wife and mother, to point out to you the Emperor's situation and to ask for your intervention. I do not ask anything for myself, for I think you would not let me need anything of which I might find myself in want. The Emperor has but little money with him. Some £400,000 to £600,000—the result of his savings on the Civil List for the last twelve years, and a great quantity of snuff-boxes set in diamonds—are at Orléans, unjustly confiscated by the Commissary of the Provisional Government. All this is the property of the Emperor's son. They have also taken away from him his library and the articles he has in daily use. I implore you to use every possible means that he may be put in possession of what belongs to him. The things that belong to the Crown—diamonds, credit-notes on the Bank, and other valuables—have been returned through

the official of the Treasury. They have allowed the Emperor £80,000 on the *grand livre*, but the manner in which the Government is behaving does not lead one to believe that it will ever be paid, if you, my dear papa, with your sense of honesty, do not defend the interests of your son-in-law, who is no longer your enemy. My implicit trust in your generosity and your kindness leads me to make this effort with you. I am sure that my confidence in you will not be deceived."

From Zürich to Lake Constance the Empress drove on. In the town of that name she had an enthusiastic reception, and stayed the night at Prince Waldsee's castle, going for a row on the lake and paying a visit to the island of Mainau. Marie Louise then crossed into the Tirol.

Though still Bavarian, the loyal Tirolean were pining to return again to Austrian allegiance, and received the daughter of the Kaiser with frantic joy. At Reitti her horses were taken out and her carriage dragged to the inn. A serenade was given under her windows in the evening, and again in the early morning a Capucin monk, heading the best male singers of the town, began a chorus in her honour in the corridor. Though snow fell all the morning, it did not prevent the inhabitants turning out to line the road all the way to Innsbrück, waving the Austrian flag and letting off fireworks at the approach of the Imperial carriage. Marie Louise was indeed again an Austrian Archduchess.

On May 12 she reached Innsbrück, lying surrounded by snowy peaks. It was after dark, and she found the Tirolean capital illuminated in her honour. The crowd was so great that two men and a child were crushed to death at the gate of the city ; the Empress sent money and assistance to their families. Dragged to the castle amid cheers by the frenzied populace, Bavarian authori-

ties received her at the foot of the grand staircase, where the guard was mounted in the national dress of brown jackets and yellow hats lined with green.

The enormous pile of the royal castle of Innsbrück much impressed the Empress's suite—its sixty-eight complete sets of rooms ; its Gallery of Giants, a magnificent marble-paved hall ; its portrait-gallery of the Austrian Imperial family ; its picture-gallery of events in Austrian history. Not even Versailles could compare with it for size. Is it surprising that, once again back in the homeland, Marie Louise should again feel herself a proud Austrian Archduchess, and that her title of Empress of the French should begin faintly to sound new and meretricious ?

In one of the family portraits, that of Joseph II., Bausset fancied he saw a resemblance to the King of Rome. The Empress had the boy fetched. The *préfet du palais* held him up on a level with the picture. But he had only in common with it the Austrian lower lip ; the chin, nose, and forehead were Napoleon's. It was, of course, mere flattery ; Bausset was pining to return to France, and to an appointment at the new old Court.

Innsbrück went mad during the Empress's two days' stay. Choirs serenaded her beneath her balcony with patriotic songs. All private feuds emanating from the Tirolean custom of peacock-feather-in-hat defiance were laid aside, and, though the arena was open all day for settling quarrels, there was no braggadocio and no fighting. A month later, and the Tirol was restored to Austria.

Passing by Halle, the Empress went down a salt-mine. At Salzburg the Prince-Royal of Bavaria received her at the gate of the imposing castle overhanging the city, the gate cut out of solid rock. The Princess-Royal, young and pretty, called next day, and Marie

Louise returned her visit at the country house of Mirabelle, built for, and named after, a former grand-ducal mistress. Two days the Empress stayed at Salzburg castle: the size of these German palaces, even those belonging to the poorest princes, again impressed her suite. But though the halls at Salzburg were larger than any in the Tuileries, everything was for show. The private rooms were a perfect rabbit-warren, and there was no comfort.

Marie Louise was now drawing near home. To the Countess de Colloredo she wrote from Salzburg that she was "so glad to be going to see her," and bringing her son, "whose looks will please you." She also wrote to Victoire de Crenneville that she shall have "such pleasure in showing you my son. I long to be able to tell you how much I appreciate all the assurances of your affection which I have so often experienced."

The 19th was Ascension Day. Marie Louise heard Mass, and then started for Enns. The next day she reached the great Abbey of Melk, on the Danube, where she found the Kaiser's grand equerry, Prince Trautmannsdorf, awaiting her to take her orders with reference to the meeting with her step-mother on the morrow.

Between St. Pölten and Sigartskirchen, about twelve miles from the capital, the two women met again, but under what altered circumstances! How the scheming, malicious Kaiserinn must have chuckled inwardly, triumphant over her enemy's downfall! She got into Marie Louise's carriage, and the Duchesse into the Empress's. There was much to say and to hear, and many tears to flow during that twelve-miles' drive alone to Vienna.

But there had been another, more pleasant, meeting and greeting. With the Kaiserinn came Marie Louise's

old *gouvernante*, the Countess Lazansky, torn from her side four years before by the machinations of Napoleon's sister, and anxious now to be one of the first to welcome back her beloved charge. Truly Marie Louise had the talent of eliciting and retaining friendship !

When, that evening, she drove into the courtyard of Schönbrunn the Empress was handed from her carriage by the Archduke Charles. At the entrance stood her other uncles and her brothers, including little Archduke Francis, who was to be the playfellow of the little King of Rome. At the door of her apartments waited her four sisters—Leopoldine, Maria Clementine, Caroline Ferdinandé, and Marie Anne. Overjoyed to receive their sister back from the clutches of the Corsican ogre, they "threw themselves on her neck, congratulating her on her return as if she had escaped a danger from which they were delighted to see her return safe and sound." Was it wonderful if she already felt at home, amongst her dearest and nearest, and that Napoleon, with no longer a home to offer her, already began to feel a little remote ?

Four quiet weeks Marie Louise spent at Schönbrunn, awaiting the Kaiser's return from Paris, and for leave to go to Parma. She resumed the old intimate domestic life of the Austrian Imperial family. She was installed on the first floor overlooking the central drive of the park ; the King of Rome's nurseries were next to her rooms. They were pleasant rooms, with a view of greenness all round, and are to be seen to-day as they then were.

The first few days were spent in long talks with her sisters—so much to see and hear—and the King of Rome to be admired and played with by the adoring young aunts. His mother had him in to *déjeuner* and fed him with tit-bits. But Madame de Montesquiou watched

over him, "noble of heart as noble of name," and Fanny Soufflot talked to him of his father, and taught him to pray for him. Close to the palace a railed-off garden was allotted to the little King, where he picked flowers every morning for his mother and "Maman 'Quiou."

The rest of the day Marie Louise rode on horseback, played the piano, and rubbed up her Italian with a view to her new dominions. Her carriages and horses had been sent to her from Rambouillet, including a beautiful arab of Napoleon's, of which she later made a present to her father. She revisited all her old haunts in the grounds of Schönbrunn, the Gloriette, the Tirolese châlet of Archduke John, of which the Trianon had reminded her, the botanical gardens, her father's special hobbies, the hot-houses, which he had made the finest in Europe. She rode and drove farther afield—to the Tiergarten, with its hundreds of wild boars, to the old Prince de Ligne's little house at Kalemberg, with its view over the Danube, and its French and Latin inscriptions, to Laxenburg, with its sham medieval castle on an island in the lake, to Prince Schwarzenberg's palace of Dornbach, with its vast gardens, or even as far as the little watering-place of Baden. Occasionally she would drive into Vienna to see the sights, taking her boy with her, and followed by silent, curious crowds, gaping at "the little Bonaparte," as they called him.

On leaving France the Empress had asked for her own private possessions, and had drawn up a list of them. These were now sent her from Fontainebleau, the Tuileries, St. Cloud, and the Trianon. They consisted of a cradle with lace curtains, of beds, of cashmere shawls, presented by the Persian ambassador; of mirrors, of a dinner service worth £200, of her Viennese piano from Fontainebleau, of her Erard piano from St. Cloud, of two pianos from the Trianons; of embroidery-frames, harps, jewel-

cases, cheval-glass given by the Crown, worth £240, from the Tuileries ; of a *clavecin*, a new model, worth £200, from St. Cloud ; a harp, a cheval-glass, another set in mosaic, and an embroidery-frame from the Trianons.

The Empress arranged her household with the absence of ceremonial etiquette which she liked ; but she kept to her own life, and wished to be free. *Déjeuner* at eleven ; dinner at seven, with Madame de Montebello, Brignole, and Messieurs de Bausset and Ménéval. Alternately were invited members of her family, of the Ministry, their wives, officials, and ladies of the Imperial household.

"Very frequently," writes Bausset, "the Emperor Francis, or one of the Archdukes, came to *déjeuner* with Marie Louise, the Archduke Charles and his brother Rudolph more often than the rest. Etiquette was alleviated by the pleasant manner of the Empress, and the easy kindness of the House of Austria. Madame de Brignole, M. de Ménéval, and myself, often admitted to these family banquets, were not victimized, nor were our evenings made dull by the solemnity of uniform, whatever might be the rank of the people who came to increase the number of guests."

Among these was often the old Prince de Ligne, a courtly figure of universal popularity, now very aged, but a link with the past, having been the friend of both Maria Theresa and Catherine of Russia.

But an even more striking personality at Vienna at that moment was Marie Caroline, Ex-Queen of Naples, the maternal grandmother of Marie Louise. When the latter returned home she found her settled in the little château of Hinzendorf, close to Schönbrunn ; they had not met since Marie Caroline's long stay at Vienna, when her granddaughter was a child.

"The daughter of Maria Theresa was," says Bausset, "above the middle height, and without any dignity in her presence, but her expression was lovely and *spirituelle*, her features fairly regular, her eyes small, and her smile gracious; her voice was hard, and her complexion colourless; the only thing to be admired about her was the extreme whiteness and beauty of her arms. She was then sixty-three, and it was easy to judge that, in her youth, she must have been pretty, but less so than her sister, Marie Antoinette of France."

When the Bourbons had been finally turned out of Naples by Napoleon, Ferdinand and his wife had been escorted by Nelson to Sicily, where they stayed under English protection. But, though the intimate friend of the ambassador's wife, Lady Hamilton, Marie Caroline only hated the English less than she hated the usurper. At the crumbling of the Empire she made her escape from Palermo, and, after a most adventurous journey by way of Constantinople and Odessa, reached the home of her birth, determined to leave no stone unturned till she had accomplished the expulsion of Murat and the restoration of her husband.

"The events of the month of April in France had just brought back Marie Louise into the bosom of her family; the grandmother and the granddaughter were in a somewhat analogous position. The similarity, only differing in its causes, gave perhaps a deeper note to their affection than the bond of blood which united them, and which, as a rule, is of little account in the highest ranks. Queen Caroline came to ask the return of a crown which recent treaties allowed Murat to keep. Marie Louise had been obliged to lay down hers. More energetic, more impulsive, the Queen of Sicily seemed irritated by the refusal which she received. I do not know if this was attributable to the anger she felt with the circum-

pect conduct of the Vienna Cabinet, or only to natural politeness, or to the consideration which she thought due to one who had just been the innocent victim of more overwhelming political convulsion than that of which she complained, but certain it is that she had enough greatness of mind to know how to appreciate the fidelity and devotion of those who had followed the fortunes of her granddaughter. She spoke of Napoleon with the noble frankness of a declared enemy, but also of an enemy who does not shut her eyes to the great qualities of that Prince. Reassured by all that the Empress told her that Napoleon had never ceased to treat his wife well, and that she had been loaded with the most touching attentions and consideration, the Queen of Sicily persuaded her to wear a miniature of Napoleon, relegated, out of a shy reserve, to the depths of a jewel-case, and she constantly covered young Napoleon, the son of her enemy, with caresses. In this behaviour there was as much shrewdness as delicacy. Her manner of speaking and of acting did not for an instant belie itself."

"The Queen," writes Ménéval, "who, in the time of Napoleon's prosperity had been his open enemy, and whose opinion could not be suspected of partiality, professed a high appreciation of his great qualities. Hearing that I had been attached to him as secretary, she sent for me to talk to me about him. She said that she had had formerly much to complain of about him (but I was fifteen years younger, she remarked) but to-day, as he was unfortunate, she forgot everything. She could not restrain her indignation about the machinations which were being employed to tear her granddaughter away from the ties which were her glory, and to deprive the Emperor of the sweetest comfort he could receive after the immense sacrifices forced from his pride. She added

that, if there was opposition made to their reunion, Marie Louise must knot her bedclothes to the window and escape in disguise." "Voilà!" she repeated. "That is what I should have done in her place, for, when one is married, it is for life!" "Such a bold step, which was well in keeping with the old Queen's adventurous spirit, was not, however, within the power of Marie Louise's temperament, nor of her notions of decorum."

Marie Louise had all the more need of her grandmother's warm-hearted partisanship, affection and good advice, as, towards the end of May, she lost the companionship of her confidante the Duchesse de Montebello. The little French circle round the Empress were by no means happy or at ease at Schönbrunn. "We were received at this Court," writes Ménéval, "diversely, but not as friends. But, on the whole, we had neither to complain or to be pleased with the reception meted out to us." One instance, however, he does give of studied neglect, if not insult, shown to the little group of French courtiers by their mistress's arch-enemy the Kaiserinn. It was on St. Ferdinand's day, May 30, when the Allies were signing the Treaty of Paris, that Marie Louise went across the Park to Hinzendorf to pay a ceremonial call on her grandmother, it being the fête-day of the latter's husband. The Duchesse, Bausset, and S. Aignan accompanied her. It chanced that the Kaiserinn was dining with her aunt, and as etiquette admitted only Marie Louise to the Queen's apartment, her suite were left to await her, but in an adjoining pantry among the servants serving dinner!

The Duchesse de Montebello, very rich, had left her children in Paris and, as we know, was anxious to return to them. Her affection and loyalty to the mistress who trusted her so could not stand the strain of exile. With her went Dr. Corvisart and the Comte de S. Aignan.

The Duchesse and Corvisart had played their part in weaning Marie Louise from her wish to rejoin her husband, and were no longer needed by the party of the Allies. The following evening worthy General Caffarelli took leave of his mistress, who gave him a parting souvenir in the shape of a little morocco-bound notebook in which she had written a few kind words. Loyal Caffarelli left behind him a long letter for the Empress in which he tried to give her the good advice of which she stood so sorely in need. "From this moment," he wrote, "Your Majesty no longer belongs to herself, she belongs to posterity. You must continue to enoble misfortune. It is the conduct of Your Majesty which will sway the opinion of France, Germany, and all Europe."

Marie Louise's suite was now reduced to less than half. It was the scheme of the Austrian Cabinet gradually to eliminate all French influence around her. The Duchesse di Montebello was replaced as *dame d'honneur* by the Contessa de Brignole, Italian by birth, a very clever woman, fully endowed with all the talent for intrigue of her race. When we add that she had been often employed by Napoleon—who never used female agents unless of exceptional capacity—in various delicate negotiations, among others those with the Pope, it will readily be seen that, in her new lady, Marie Louise might easily find a mind too clever for her. The Contessa's son-in-law—the Duc de Dalberg, one of Napoleon's marshals, had married the rich Contessina di Brignole—had very promptly gone over to the winning side, and Talleyrand was already beginning to employ the mother in his own new interests.

Bausset, now called *grand maître*, Ménéval, secretary, Herceau, doctor, and Mlles Rabusson and de Sorbac, *lectrices*, were now all that was left to Marie Louise. The King of Rome had still with him the Comtesse de

Montesquiou, Mesdames Marchand and Soufflot, nurses, and the latter's daughter, Fanny, whom he loved and would not leave.

Marie Louise was to become Austrian again. Very gradually and imperceptibly the net thrown by Metternich was being drawn round her by her step-mother, and with the assistance even of those of her own household. The Kaiserinn and her ladies wished to secure a hold on her and direct her. A congress of all the Allies was to assemble in the autumn at Vienna, and it was thought that it would be unpleasant for Marie Louise to be there during that time. A royal castle in Hungary was suggested as a retreat, or, if a course of waters were obligatory, why Aix, and not Carlsbad which would be nearer her family. But Marie Louise had set her heart on Aix because she had arranged to meet her dear Duchesse there. She was still drawn toward France and the Emperor, but, through her worries, she began to perceive that the object was to separate her from him. After Napoleon landed at Elba letters between him and Marie Louise were stopped both ways for five days. He complains that he had never had any since the Fréjus courier. From April 6 till June 4, out of six that his wife wrote, only two reached him.

Against this powerful family influence there was absolutely no one to keep Marie Louise loyal to her husband except her grandmother and the faithful secretary. The former, indeed, had her own axe to grind at the coming congress, her own rights to demand ; all the more honour, therefore, to her courage in running counter to the Kaiser and Metternich by trying to influence her granddaughter as she did. Unfortunately, as we have already seen, this same granddaughter always agreed with the last person who advised her, Ménéval, at this time, writes to his wife in Paris regretting what he calls

the Empress's *facilité*, meaning probably an excess of kindly feeling and of credulity. She was too easily the dupe of people who wanted to get something out of her, who made her promise what she could not perform. She was averse, also, to any business affairs.

"To think of her own interests," he writes, "she considers shows a lack of dignity; not to welcome any adventurers who try to attach themselves to her, is a want of generosity." He tried to thwart those impostors, to open her eyes to her own interests, and to counteract her fatal disposition of living for the day only and with no thought of the future. Sometimes he thought his labours lost, and was sorry he had stayed with her. But a word from her, uttered with all that simple charm which endeared her to all who really knew her, sufficed to bring him back to his duty. "The Empress is touched with my faithfulness. She told me so with tears in her eyes. I shall only leave her at the last gasp."

But he saw troubled waters ahead, and wrote again to his wife at the end of May. "I do not augur anything good from what will happen here in the month of June. If it were not for the real attachment I bear to the Empress, I should not care at all. For as to what are called one's own interests, they could not be of less account. You know, however, that it was not for these that I have followed her; I only obeyed my own heart, and I never counted upon what is the object of all ambition. I shall never regret it, because, whatever happens, my conscience is clear. People are saying openly here that Her Majesty is too young to manage herself. Probably they assign to me part of the honour of advising her; but what does her most harm is the thoughtlessness with which she has entrusted her financial affairs, and affairs of honour, to Bausset, who, unfor-

tunately, enjoys a rather bad reputation, which is well known here, and which reacts on us. Add to this the arrival shortly of M. de Cussy, whom you know well, and you can judge not much more is required to ruin us. All this, indeed, moves me to tears, and I am unfortunate in loving so dearly a Princess who is worthy in so many respects of a deep devotion."

The Kaiser was to return to his capital from Paris on June 15. The previous day was spent entirely by Marie Louise and her French suite in long talks with the Ex-Queen of Naples. It was a last concerted attempt to bring Marie Louise back to a sense of her duty to her husband, ere the ever-preponderating influence of her father again made itself felt. She had just received a letter from Napoleon, which she "brought to her grandmother" mixed up in her writing-case with "other letters and despatches." This shows that, up to this date at any rate, she received letters from him unopened. Napoleon was urging upon her the propriety of rejoining him at once, or, at all events, of avoiding going to Aix, so obstinately prescribed by Corvisart; for Aix was a French town, and therefore, in Napoleon's eyes, an unsuitable place of residence for the Ex-Empress as a private person. Bertrand also wrote from Elba to Ménéval: "If the Empress has awaited at Vienna the reply to her letter, the Emperor desires that she do not go to Aix, and, if she has already gone there, that she only spends the time of one course of baths there, and returns as soon as possible to Tuscany, where there are waters of the same ingredients as Aix. These are nearer to us and to Parma, and would allow of the Empress having her son with her. . . . The journey to Aix pleases the Emperor all the less because there are probably no longer any Austrian troops there, and the Empress might be exposed to the insults of some adventurers, and besides, her neighbourhood would

not please the sovereign of that country. There are none of these drawbacks in Tuscany."

Madame de Brignole was that day sending a courier off to Elba, and Marie Louise took the opportunity to despatch a letter to her husband. Though several letters had passed between them, relations were already growing cold, and she was not keeping up such an active correspondence with him, though, as yet, there was no hindrance placed to her writing to him.

But, like the spoilt child she was, Marie Louise had set her heart on Aix and upon meeting the Duchesse. Recovered in health and spirits from the troubles of the spring, she had begun to feel a little bored after a month at Schönbrünn. Even Ménéval found the life there dull, he tells his wife :

"If you want to know how my day is arranged, here it is : I rise at six or seven in the morning, but not later. I read a little, or receive some one. I dress and go at nine o'clock to the Empress, with whom I spend an hour. At eleven-thirty we breakfast, usually alone—that is to say, the Empress, Madame de Brignole, Bausset, and I. After breakfast Her Majesty sometimes receives her uncles or strangers, or she occupies herself in her own rooms, or spends some hours with her family, or takes an Italian lesson, till five o'clock, when she goes out, if weather permits, on horseback, or on foot, or for a drive ; I generally go with her. At seven o'clock we dine ; almost always the Empress invites two or three persons from Vienna. After dinner we play at *la poule*, and at ten o'clock Her Majesty retires. After a little conversation we go on playing for half an hour or an hour, and then we go to bed. There is a very regular life, and, I must add, a very monotonous one, as far as I am concerned."

The society of only her brothers and sisters and

relatives varied with a few small dinners, palled, after a while. For the last four years Napoleon had kept her in a whirl of amusements of all kinds. Now, restless, she longed for a change, to be taken out of herself and her worries ; her conscience was uneasy, too, and she was remorseful at having left him. Of the delights of that fashionable watering-place, Aix, she had often heard much ; but Austria was as much opposed to the scheme as was Napoleon. Marie Louise might do without the latter's consent, but perforce she had to wait for that of her father.

Meanwhile, at Malmaison, Napoleon's faithful Josephine had died, lamenting with her last breath that the existence of Marie Louise prevented her joining Napoleon at Elba. The ruin of the Empire had only jarred his second wife ; it shattered his first.

"On July 15," writes Ménéval, "her Majesty set out at eight o'clock from Schönbrunn, with Madame de Brignole and myself, for Sigartskirchen, where she was to await at the post-house the arrival of the Emperor of Austria, who was returning to his States, and whom she had determined to go and meet. The Emperor Francis reached Sigartskirchen at half-past one, and came to meet Her Majesty at the post house, accompanied by the Empress of Austria. The former Empress of the French received her father in the same room in the post-house where, in 1805, the Emperor Napoleon had received the deputation which came to bring him the keys of Vienna. The memory of that scene, which I had witnessed nine years before, came vividly back to my mind. I saw again the conqueror, before him Count Zinzendorf, followed by the venerable magistrates, who, bowing, presented to him on a silver salver the keys of the proud capital of Austria. The hallucination seized me to such an extent that involuntarily I shut my eyes

to recover myself. When I opened them again I saw a very different scene. The parts were changed. On the same spot where I had seen the victorious soldier in a proud attitude, softened by a feeling of natural generosity and by the sympathy with which the humiliation of a great people inspires a magnanimous heart, I saw a Princess almost kneeling, with moist eyes, before a Prince who raised her with a mixture of pride and tenderness. This Princess was the wife of Napoleon ; the Prince, the father-in-law of her husband, of whom he had once begged mercy at the bivouac of Sar-Uchitz, and whom to-day he proscribed. God ! I said to myself, what a freak of fortune, what a lesson ! ”

Marie Louise drove back alone in the carriage with her father. At Burkendorf the family all dined together, and she then went on a quarter of an hour ahead to Schönbrünn, accompanied by her brother Ferdinand and the Grand-duke of Würzburg, her uncle. When the Kaiser reached the palace she brought her son to meet him. Immense crowds of loyal Viennese thronged the roads and the grounds of Schönbrünn, and even overflowed into the imperial apartments to welcome back their beloved sovereign.

The next day, at eight in the morning, the Kaiser made his triumphal entry into Vienna, on horseback. It had been suggested to him to ride Napoleon’s arab, which his daughter had given him ; but better taste prevailed. Vienna was giddy with joy. “The illuminations of the houses,” writes Gentz, “costing 450,000 to 2,000,000 florins, will be unparalleled in the history of the world. And what feasting afterwards ! Things about me are growing too wild ! ”

Marie Louise got round her father, who was, in his way, really devoted to her, and, after due consultation with Metternich, he gave her permission, despite Napoleon, to

go to Aix. But her evil genius made two stipulations. The first was that the King of Rome should be left behind as a kind of hostage, and the second that she should be accompanied by a sort of commissary of the Austrian Government. A mentor was necessary for the guidance of this inexperienced young woman should she venture beyond Metternich's immediate surveillance, and the mentor was not to be Ménéval, or any one devoted to Napoleon.

Metternich and the Kaiserinn put their heads together. At first their choice fell upon Prince Nicholas Esterházy, a relative of Marie Louise's equerry in her girlhood, and a highly respectable courtier ; but on second thoughts he was considered "too old" (!) to acquire the desirable influence over Marie Louise, who was twenty-three !

Count Adam Albert Neipperg was then suggested, sounded, and approved, for he was a devoted adherent of Austria. A more extraordinary choice could not have been made. For, whoever the instrument of Austrian policy was to be, that man must necessarily occupy the position of close personal adviser of Marie Louise, and inevitably, given the small dimensions of her household, and the easy life of incognito she was to lead at Aix, be admitted to much private intercourse with her. Napoleon, as we have seen, had wrapped his young wife round with every conceivable precaution, lest her innocence should be sullied by contact with courtiers of a world and an epoch notable for its immorality. Her father chose for her intimate counsellor a man of most disreputable private life.

The 29th of June was fixed for the Empress's departure. The King of Rome was to be left in charge of Madame de Montesquiou and the celebrated Viennese doctor Franck. On the Sunday before she left, Marie Louise received a great many people—the Imperial family,

courtiers, and notabilities. Next day she drove to Baden to take leave of her father, who was there for his health. A rather serious indisposition of Madame de Brignole threatened to postpone the Empress's departure. On the 29th her uncles, her brothers, and her grandmother came to say good-bye. It was to be Marie Louise's final parting with the brave old lady, who had done her best for her up to the last. At six o'clock she went to say farewell to her sisters, at half-past seven she dined alone with her boy and Ménéval, and during dinner the Countesses Colloredo and Crenneville came to make their adieux. At eight came her step-mother, determined to have the last word, and she remained till Marie Louise got into her carriage, having promised faithfully to come back to Vienna after having gone through two courses of baths at Aix. Metternich, having laid the coping-stone on his work, had gone off on a holiday to England.

Marie Louise had determined to reach Aix by way of Bavaria and Switzerland, and thus spin out the travelling which she so much enjoyed. Bausset went ahead as sort of courier. Count Neipperg was only to meet her at Aix. Travelling under the name of Contessa di Colorno—one of her country palaces in Parma—she went by Lambach—scene of a French victory over the Russians in 1805, which must have awoke memories of Napoleon—to Munich, where she was received by his stepson Eugène and his wife, a Bavarian Princess. They carried her off to supper. "We followed her," writes Ménéval, "Madame de Brignole and I, in all the disorder of travelling dress, and supped at the palace of Prince Eugène with the Princess-Royal of Würtemberg, sister and sister-in-law of our hosts. This Princess, after separating from a husband forced on her by Napoleon's policy, had come for consolation to reside with her sister."

Providence was preparing a startling reparation for her by placing her, a year later, on the throne of Austria."

In her hurry to reach Switzerland Marie Louise travelled all night by Landsberg to Morsburg, where they found poor Bausset, always a bad traveller, laid up at the "Bär" with the gout. This delayed the party till the 5th, when they started at half-past six in the morning, and sailed across the lake to Constance, where carriages were waiting. At Baden Marie Louise met another member of her husband's family, Louis, taking the baths there. After spending the night at the "Barbarian" at Aargau, they reached Bern and the "Falcken" at seven in the evening, after an exceedingly hot and dusty drive.

The Empress spent the day at Berne seeing the sights, including the famous bear-pit, and shopping, buying, among other things, a fine picture of Berne by Lorry, which she gave to Ménéval. On the 8th they drove on to Lausanne. Next day she went for a drive in the neighbourhood, during which Ménéval's carriage was upset and his wrist sprained. Then she went for a row on the lake from Ouchy, wearing, says a Swiss eye-witness, "a white dress under a green silk tunic, a much-draped shawl, a straw hat trimmed with lace and flowers. She looked sad, but sweet, with a very pleasing expression."

On returning to her inn, Marie Louise found another brother-in-law, Joseph, had come to call upon her. This ex-monarch had taken up his abode in a hired country-house at Les Pragins, twelve miles from Lausanne, on the edge of the lake. Marie Louise spent the next day there, rowing on the lake, strolling, during a fearful heat, in the shrubberies, and leaving, after a light meal, in his char-à-banc for the English inn at the gates of Geneva, "Les Sécherons," so famous at that time. After spending the night there, King Joseph returned to his villa.

He lent a riding-horse to his sister-in-law, whose own horses had all been sent direct to Aix, and she rode it during her Chamonix tour. Doubtless had the Austrian Government foreseen all these meetings with Napoleon's family, and had Neipperg already mounted guard, they would not have taken place. But Marie Louise took no advantage of them to draw back nearer to Napoleon.

At seven in the morning next day she left "Les Sécherons," reaching Chamonix in a terrific storm and pouring rain. Bausset, whose portly figure rendered him unsuited for mountain excursions, was left behind. Only Ménéval, Madame de Brignole, Mlle Rabusson, a doctor, and a Geneva guide accompanied the Empress. For six days the latter thoroughly explored the Chamonix district —glaciers, waterfalls, the Montanvert, and the Col de Balme. So intensely did she enjoy the Alpine air and scenery that she begged her secretary to immortalize her tour in verse. But Ménéval's devotion for once failed him, and he was unequal to the task. "The Duchesse di Colorno," he writes, "was indefatigable and courageous, even to rashness. One would have said that she tried to make herself giddy. She showed a contented serenity and a courage which astonished her guides . . . doing all the excursions on foot or on a mule, and not allowing herself to be carried ; and her health benefited much."

On the 16th she was back again at "Les Sécherons," leaving it next morning for Aix-les-Bains. As she reached the outskirts of the town in the golden light of a late July evening, an officer in the picturesque uniform of the Hungarian Hussars, with the pelisse slung from the shoulder, came prancing up to the carriage door and saluted her respectfully. Of middle age and of middle height, but well made, his scanty fair hair curled under his busby, and his left eye was keen and piercing. The other he had lost, and its absence was concealed by a black

shade bound across his forehead. He announced himself as Count Adam Albert von Neipperg.

At first sight of him, writes Ménéval, Marie Louise received an unpleasant impression. "Was it the instinct of a loyal heart but little confident in itself, which pointed out this man as an evil genius, and warned her secretly of the danger of abandoning herself to his advice?"

## CHAPTER XX

### *THE SECOND SACRIFICE*

IT is strange that Napoleon's lifelong foe, the man chosen by his deadly enemy, Metternich, to seduce his wife from her duty, conjugal, maternal, and patriotic, should have been half-French. Perhaps, as is sometimes the case, the knowledge of his illegitimacy—the secret of a few—was the reason of Neipperg's implacable hatred of the country of his mother's lover.

Count Leopold de Neipperg, of an old Suabian family, a diplomatist, was also a mechanical genius. When ambassador at Paris before the Revolution he amused himself with inventing a secret letter-copying machine, a kind of early typewriter, and neglected his wife, who found consolation with one Comte d'H——. That the latter was the father of her son a letter found by the wife of Comte d'H—— after her husband's death leaves in no manner of doubt. That Count Adam Albert de Neipperg, as this son was called, was acquainted with his origin is also indubitable, for, when in Paris with the Allies in 1814, he paid a visit to the Comtesse de C——, daughter of Comte d'H——, and therefore his half-sister, and was useful to General C——, her husband.

Born in 1775, at fifteen Neipperg entered the Austrian army, and Jemappes was his baptism of fire. At eighteen, at Doelen, he was dangerously wounded,

a sabre-cut piercing his right eye. In hospital the republicans thought he spoke French too well for a German, and nearly shot him for an *émigré*. One-eyed for life, he took part in the Tirolese War, which ended in Austria annexing Venice, and in the Italian campaigns, especially distinguishing himself at Marengo by rousing Mélas to the fact that the battle was not lost.

In 1810 he was sent to Paris to negotiate an exchange of prisoners, and then to Sweden as ambassador. While bringing about the *rapprochement* of Russia, England, and Sweden, and the defection of Bernadotte from Napoleon, he was equally successful socially. Madame de Staël, who met him in Stockholm, dubbed this gallant and brilliant officer "the German Bayard."

The patriotic campaigns of 1812–13 recalled Neipperg to military duty. At Leipzig he was promoted lieutenant field-marshall on the field.

Next, once again a diplomat, he was sent to Italy to lure Joachim Murat over to the Allies, a work that earned for him the praise of Metternich, that he had "on this occasion given new proofs of his talents, his tact, and his devotion to the service of our august sovereign."

Such a clever instrument was shortly used again by Metternich, this time as a peacemaker. He was sent from Mantua with a letter from the King of Bavaria for his son-in-law, Eugène Beauharnais, Viceroy of Italy, begging him to follow the King's example and cease a struggle which Napoleon's abdication had rendered hopeless. But in this case Neipperg's persuasion in backing up the King's letter failed. "I do not understand anything about politics," replied Eugène; "but if it is true that the Emperor has abdicated, let us not lose a moment, but march to support the rights of the Empress and her son."

Nevertheless, this *beau cavalier* of a diplomat-soldier seemed to Metternich exactly the man to his hand with Marie Louise. Neipperg was at Milan when the minister informed him that he had been appointed *grand maître* of the household of the Duchess of Parma. He was living there with the wife he had married only a year previously, *née* Contessa Teresa Pola, whom he had carried off from her husband, one Ramondini of Bologna, and by whom he already had five children !

When bidding farewell to this wife, before proceeding to take up his appointment, Neipperg, speaking of Marie Louise, remarked : "Before six months are out I shall be her lover, and soon her husband."

Previously to the Pola *affaire*, writes the Baronne de Montet, whose husband knew him well in Italy, Neipperg "had been passionately in love with a Contessa Trento, who had her marriage annulled in order to marry him. This was very difficult, and one day Neipperg, speaking, with the eagerness of a man deeply smitten, of the complications and delays with regard to his marriage with Contessa Trento, exclaimed : "But that is just it ! I have been foretold that I shall only make extraordinary marriages !"

When he met Marie Louise at Aix, Neipperg was thirty-nine, seventeen years her senior, "a man of noble and chivalrous ideas," writes Madame de Montet, "and with a face and figure extremely well-bred." His disfiguring black shade and band did not, apparently, detract from his attractions in the eyes of the many ladies who had favoured him. Why he continued to wear it, when glass eyes had been invented for more than a century, is an unsolved problem.

Neipperg was an eminently "all-round" man. "He possessed," writes Ménéval, "pleasant accomplishments, and especially that of music. Active, clever, unscrupu-

pulous, he knew how to conceal his guile under a guise of simplicity ; he expressed himself well and also wrote well. Count Neipperg was not endowed with a remarkable exterior. A black band hid the deep scar of a wound which had deprived him of an eye ; but this disfigurement was overlooked when one considered him attentively. The wound, indeed, suited the general effect of his face, which had a military appearance. He had very fair hair, scanty and curly ; his glance was quick and penetrating. His features were neither common nor well-bred ; but, taken altogether, they showed him to be a subtle and supple man. His complexion, as a whole high-coloured, was not fresh ; the wear and tear and the fatigues of war and many wounds were apparent on it. He was of middle height, but well built, and the elegance of his appearance was enhanced by the smart cut of the Hungarian uniform. General Neipperg was then about forty-two. The behaviour of Comte Neipperg was that of a cautious man. His usual expression was kind, mixed with eagerness and gravity. His manners were polite, insinuating, flattering. He combined with much tact a very observant mind ; he had the art of listening and of giving a thoughtful attention to the words of his interlocutor. At one moment his face would assume a caressing expression, at another his glance sought to guess thoughts. He was as clever in penetrating the designs of others as he was prudent in managing his own. Combining an appearance of great modesty with a deep foundation of vanity and ambition, he never talked about himself. He was brave in war ; his many wounds showed that he had not spared himself."

As Neipperg rode by Marie Louise's carriage window from Caring to Aix, she vaguely recalled having seen him during that glorious time at Dresden, when he had been attached to her suite as chamberlain by her father. But

there does not seem any proof for Madame de Cavaignac's story in her *chronique scandaleuse*: "Les Mémoires d'une Inconnue," which she only relates at fourth hand. "Now this is what M. Bresson, who saw a great deal of my nephew, told him he had from La Valette, whom he had received and hidden in his house after his escape. At the beginning of 1814, a courier was arrested or found dead, I do not recollect which, carrying a letter from Marie Louise to this Neipperg, in which she told him: 'Let us have patience; all this is crumbling away and cannot last long!' It is M. de La Valette, who had handled and read the letter, who reported it to M. Bresson, who told it to my nephew."

Even supposing her not as devoted to Napoleon early in 1814 as her letters show, and those surrounding her bear witness, Marie Louise was too well guarded to have such a secret, besides not being clever enough, or a sufficient actress, to keep it from Napoleon and his myrmidons.

Neipperg had taken for the Empress a villa situated on a hill above the town, commanding a lovely view of the lake of Bourget, backed by the rocky mountains and glaciers. "I am lodged here in a very small way," she wrote to her father, four days after her arrival, "but comfortably. Count Neuperg (*sic*) is full of attentions to me, and his ways please me very much." At first, however, Marie Louise felt sad at Aix, and only received Neipperg semi-officially, at least as long as Ménéval stayed with her.

But five days after her arrival the latter took two months' leave of absence to rejoin his wife and children in Paris. One cannot begrudge this faithful servant a short holiday, after all he had gone through for his master and his mistress, but his departure was a fatal loss for Marie Louise, for it left the field open for Neipperg's design.

For weeks she was to be left practically alone with Madame de Brignole and Neipperg, "two creatures who seemed to have been invented on purpose to detach her from her husband, for the one, prompted by Talleyrand, talked cleverly against the Emperor, and the other knew that, in calumniating Napoleon, he was displeasing neither Metternich nor Franz."

Yet the Empress, driving in carriages emblazoned with the Imperial arms, attended by footmen wearing the green Imperial livery, was also entirely surrounded by a French suite—Brignole, Rabusson, the *lectrice*, her fiancé Dr. Herceau, Bausset, *grand maître*, Cussy, chamberlain, devoted to Napoleon. Strange that the Bourbons did not take fright at this sojourn of the Empress and her imperial *cortège* in a French town. Doubtless they had a well-founded reliance on Metternich's confidence in Neipperg. Insinuating, flattering, zealous, a born manager of women, yet withal prudent, the latter soon became her factotum.

After the excitement and the invigorating air of the high Alps, Neipperg's first care was that the relaxing valley of Aix and the enervating effect of the waters should not bore or depress Marie Louise. She took part in all the public amusements of the gay watering-place: he arranged excursions, *fêtes-champêtres*, boating parties on the lake, and an excursion to the Abbey of Haute Combe, where the monks sing dirges over the tombs of the house of Savoy. She took long rides with Neipperg about the country.

He sent to Paris for Talma to come and act to her, and "she gave evening parties which made a sensation, at which Talma, always superbly energetic and passionate, recited in plain clothes the most famous scenes in English répertoire." Isabey came to paint her portrait, which she gave to Bausset. The Empress hoped to induce the



Billard's "Maris de Marie-Louise" (Perrin).

ALBERT ADAM, GRAF VON NEIPPERG.  
From Comte de Bombelles' "Monumenti e Munificenzi," etc.



artist to follow her to Parma, but he set too high a price on his services, "and even if he would come for nothing," she wrote to Ménéval, "I should not allow myself to take him without having first obtained the Emperor's consent. You know what a prejudice he has against him, which I must respect; although separated from him, I am none the less responsible for my conduct to my husband."

At present, so far so good. Her conjugal feeling is irreproachable.

Neipperg also sent for Paër, who had been the music-master of Marie Louise's mother, and whom she had appointed director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris in 1812. There was much music-making at the villa. Neipperg was no mean performer on the piano; his talent was one of his great attractions in the eyes of the Empress, and music proved to be a great bond between them.

With this lively life Marie Louise grew better in health and spirits. "My health is benefited by my stay," she wrote to her friend Victoire. "I bathe regularly, and it strengthens my chest."

Yet she had fits of melancholy and remorse, torn between her duty to Napoleon and the course along which she was being dragged by those around her. She missed Ménéval and his loyal advice, and her frequent letters to him show the struggle which was going on within her. She wrote almost directly he had left her.

"You have only gone a very short time, but yet I make haste to write to you that you may not have to complain of my unpunctuality. I hope that you will sometimes think of me, and that you will not give yourself up to black thoughts; in which case I remind you of your promise to write to me at once that I may conjure them away.

"In a few days you will be happy. You will be with your family, with your little children, whom you will find much grown; whereas I shall miss you very much, as much for your good advice as for the pleasure it was to me to talk to you.

"My health is pretty good. I took my first bath yesterday. I do not know if I shall be courageous enough to go on, for they smell very badly.

"I am not writing to you a long letter, because it is very late. I beg you to believe all my feelings of esteem and friendship.

"Your very affectionate

"LOUISE."

Life was whirling fast at Aix, but a week later she wrote again :

"I have not written since last week, because I had not a moment to myself, and hope you will not have been uneasy over my silence, because I begged M. la Duchesse de Montebello to give you my news. I am sending you a great many letters I have received in the packages from Vienna. There is one which I opened because there were plans for arranging my stables. I send you M. Balouhey's letter, which was enclosed. I have also received, addressed to you, some from M. Marescalchi which I have kept.

"I beg you will inform M. Balouhey again how necessary he is to me for my business affairs. I wish that he could come before I leave for Italy, otherwise my business will be in terrible disorder.

"I hope your health is good ; mine is very good now, from using the baths ; I have already had five, and I walk a great deal, quite as beautiful excursions as those I went with you. The rest of my time is spent in writing the

account of my journey in Chamouny (*sic*). Isabey has already made some sketches of it ; they are charming. I have not got on with the letter-press so well. You know the materials you were to bring me to correct the copy ; I do not require them. If you will keep them I suggest that you have them put in a case and sent to Parma ; otherwise I advise you to get rid of them as soon as possible. I had rather that that was not done at present, for I am so lazy that I have hardly reached the point where we crossed the *torrent of La Gria*. . . .

"I hope Madame de Ménéval has not forgotten me, I pity her very much this heat. . . . How she must suffer on account of it by reason of her pregnancy! It is so bad here that we can hardly leave the house.

"I have not yet received news of you, which makes me uneasy ; I believe, however, that you are writing to me ; at least they should be civil enough to pass on my letters to me after having read them. I beg you to believe all my friendship."

"Your very affectionate

"LOUISE."

On July 31 Marie Louise wrote what was to be the last letter that Napoleon was to receive from her. She sent it by a pseudo-commercial traveller, and it did not reach him till August 20. In it she told him that she found she should be obliged to go back to Vienna, but assured him of her love and of her speedy return to him.

She wrote as follows to Ménéval, August 4 :

"I received yesterday, with much pleasure, your letter of the 27th, and beg you to continue to give me all your news, and all that interests you ; I beg you also to give me news of the Duchesse's little family, for she is

not very good at details. I am still waiting for an answer from my father to know the time when I may go to Parma. I will let you know at once. Though I am very pleased that you can soon return to me, I feel very much that you must wish to stay with Madame de Ménéval a little longer, and certainly it is unselfish of me to allow you to do so.

“ My health is good, but I am terribly tired with this great heat. I have just had a more tiring excursion than that of the Montanvert ; I returned this morning at two. I meant to describe it to you, but I am so sleepy that I must put it off till next post-day.

“ Your very affectionate  
“ LOUISE.”

That same day the Duchesse de Montebello arrived to spend a fortnight with her friend ; one may be certain that her influence was not used in favour of the island of Elba ; moreover, Marie Louise was now set on going to Parma.

To Ménéval, August 6 :

“ I have received this morning all the letters which you entrusted to the Duchesse de Montebello, and I am not exaggerating when I tell you that they give me very much pleasure. I am sorry to see that you are uneasy at not getting any news of me ; it is the fourth time I am writing to you. Also by the Duchesse I will write to you at length. I am very sorry that she cannot stay longer than ten or twelve days ; it is a very short time, and I do not know when I shall see her again. My health is very good compared with what it was at Vienna, which is due to the baths and the peace I am enjoying here. Worries kill me. My compliments to Madame de Ménéval. I do not write any more, because I have no time.”

Marie Louise was becoming more and more anxious to take possession of her new States. About a fortnight after her arrival at Aix she sent Bausset off to Parma to inspect and report.

To Ménéval she wrote again, on August 8 :

"I am still in a terrible state of uncertainty with regard to my future. I have written a letter to my father by M. de Karaczaï, in which I have asked his leave to go and settle in at Parma on September 10, at latest. Will the leave be granted? I fear not. . . .

"If the reply is in the negative I shall decide not to return to Vienna before the sovereigns have left there, and I shall try and have my son back with me again for the time being; I shall settle at Geneva or at Parma while awaiting the Congress, for it is impossible for me to remain longer than the bathing season here. I cannot tell you how impatiently I await a reply, and I beg you to help me with your advice as to my decision. Do not fear to tell me the truth, if my decision seems to you unreasonable; I claim your advice as from a friend, and I hope you will give it me candidly.

"I have just this moment received a letter from the Emperor from the Isle of Elba, of July 4. He begs me not to go to Aix, but to go to Tuscany to take the waters. I shall write to my father about it. You know how much I desire to follow the Emperor's wishes; but in this case should I do so if they do not agree with my father's plans? I send you a letter from Porto Ferrajo. It should have given me some particulars; if there are any, please let me know them. I thank you very much for those you have given me. I wanted them; it is so long since I have had any. I am in a very critical and unhappy position. I must be very prudent in my behaviour. There are times when it

makes my head spin so that I think the best thing I could do would be to die. . . .

"My health is fairly good. I am having my tenth bath. They would do me good if my mind were easier; but I shall not be easy till I am out of this fatal state of uncertainty. I am delighted with the thought that you will soon come and discuss things with me and calm my poor head; I need it badly. M. de Bausset went off a few days ago, and with him all the papers I wanted to see, so that I have not been able to go into the month's accounts, as I had intended. I am expecting impatiently the courier which he has despatched from Parma.

"The heat here is still awful. It is not good for the long rides I take. We sometimes get caught in the dark, and I die of fright getting home on horseback.

"Your very affectionate

"LOUISE."

A sad letter, showing plainly how Marie Louise was torn in twain between her conscience and Neipperg's growing influence, longing for Ménéval's faithful counsel and for her child. Yet, weak and swayed about as she is, it is the uncertainty about Parma which worries her so. There is no anxiety to accede to Napoleon's wishes. Her father's desires, in her estimation, quite override them.

The Emperor had written to Ménéval that he expected the Empress at the end of August. At the same time he said to General Bertrand: "Write to her that I desire that she has my son sent to me, and that it is odd that I do not hear any news of her; it must be because the letters are kept back, which must be done by some subordinate official, and cannot be done by her father. No one has any right over the Empress and her son."

That Marie Louise felt such qualms of conscience as were compatible with her light and easy-going nature is apparent from her letter to Ménéval written on the Fête-Napoléon, a day awakening sad memories, for which she actually apologizes to Ménéval, as if he himself were not also a prey to them. But there is no hint of Elba, Napoleon's name is not mentioned, even to the faithful servant who never swerved in his allegiance.

"I have not had any answer from my father to the letter of which I told you in my last. This time of uncertainty is very hard, and very long for me to bear. I am expecting it so impatiently, and I will tell you about it at once. Dark forebodings tell me that it will not be favourable; perhaps I am wrong! How can I be cheerful on the 15th when I am obliged to spend this fête-day, so solemn for me, away from the two persons who are dearest to me! I ask your forgiveness for thus telling you of my sad thoughts, but friendship and the interest you have always shown in me embolden me to do so, on condition that you tell me if I bore you. . . .

"LOUISE."

"P.S.—I have just received a letter from Parma that informs me that M. Marescalchi has a successor in M. Magawly, who has upset all the Provisional Government. M. Marescalchi is no longer anything but the minister of Austria at my Court; my father has also appointed M. de San Vitale to be my Grand Chamberlain, and all that without consulting me. This hurts and annoys me. M. Magawly has said at Parma that my father has sent for M. de San Vitale to Vienna to take up his appointment, and that I shall be requested to come to Vienna during all the time of the Congress. What a sad outlook! I am tempted to ask him to allow me

to pass the winter at Florence, promising only to write to the Emperor vice the Grand-duke ; but it seems certain that he will refuse me. What I have determined is not to go to Vienna during the time the sovereigns are there. Advise me, I beg you, for I assure you that I am very much to be pitied."

The question is if the depression in this letter is entirely due to the Parma worries. May it not have been caused by Marie Louise feeling that she was struggling hopelessly in the meshes of Neipperg's net ? Bausset, indeed, implies in his Memoirs that their liaison began at Aix ; but he was writing after he had turned his coat and was ready to cast any aspersion on his former Empress. It seems to us, however, that Marie Louise's letters are those of a woman still only tempted, but fearful lest she should be unable much longer to resist.

Though politics were the chief reason for keeping Marie Louise as yet away from Parma, her new dominions were not by any means ready for her reception.

When, at the beginning of 1814, Napoleon's kingdom of Italy, in consequence of Murat's treachery, began to fall away from him, the allied troops under General Nugent, commanding the Austro-British force on the right of the Po, had entered Parma amidst the enthusiastic acclamation of the inhabitants. On the 6th Count Strassoldi, Austrian governor of Milan, issued an edict appointing a Provisional Government, with Count Fernando Marescalchi, high up in the Austrian service, as Imperial commissioner. The government consisted of Count Stéfano Sanvitale, Mistrali, who had been secretary to the *maire* and had been considered by the French as a *tête forte*, and Count Filippo Magawly-Cerati—an excellent triumvirate.

Magawly—Italianized Macaulay?—was a clever young

Irishman, the son of a count of the Holy Roman Empire of that name in the King's County. The family, old and rich, had become poor owing to religious troubles in Ireland, when Count Patrick succeeded to the estates of a branch settled in Parma. He died young and his widow sent her eldest son Filippo and his brother to Parma, where Duke Fernando wished to educate them as a compensation for wrongs done to the family. He died a few days after their arrival, but the trustees of the estates placed the two lads at the Lalatta College, and when their education was finished they remained at Parma. Both had Irish vivacity and shrewdness; Filippo had specially charming, well-bred manners, and, in addition, was an uncommonly good-looking youth, whom every one liked and esteemed. In 1808 he married the Contessina Chiera, only daughter and heiress of Conte Cerati, whose name he added to his own when she succeeded to her father's property. Magawly-Cerati was well thought of by the Napoleonic Government for his cleverness, holding several offices under it, and when appointed to the Provisional Government he showed aptitude and zeal in affairs. Pio VII., when he passed through Parma on his return to Rome selected the clever young Irishman—he was only twenty-seven—as his representative at the forthcoming Congress to be held at Vienna. At the Austrian capital Magawly came under the notice of the Kaiser, who had already received reports from him, both when at Paris and during the campaign, upon the condition of Parma. Franz was very interested in the Duchy; he desired to arrange it so that his favourite daughter should be happy there and make her subjects happy too. He was pleased with the young Irishman's frank manners and self-confidence, and their long conversations convinced him of Magawly's quick judgment in politics as well as of his diplomatic prudence. Magawly described to the

Kaiser what the old administration at Parma had been, and made suggestions as to how it should be restored without yielding to the reactionary tendencies of those who thought that everything was bad which had been done under Napoleon's new notions.

Meanwhile Marescalchi was not progressing comfortably as commissioner at Parma. The agent Capprei, sent by the Empress to report upon the country, had been badly received by the Austrian troops, who treated Parma as if it was a conquered country, and was thrown into prison till Marie Louise obtained his release. Marescalchi found himself, he wrote to Ménéval, "in a very difficult situation. I arrived to find everything already arranged and with a system and measures which are totally above the strength of the country. But what horrifies me is the actual disorder in which the government is. The garrison, which we have to keep at our expense, absorbs almost all the money which comes into the Treasury, and the expense is so great that, not being able to meet it by what is raised, the national debt increases daily, and those who contribute, or who are obliged to give in victuals and lodging, cry for help, without which they will have to give up."

"Thus deprived of means, the taxpayers find it impossible to pay the taxes, the wheel only turns very slowly, and the country has no resources of any kind.

"The object which concerns me most at this moment is the reduction of the garrison, or, at least, the placing of it on a peace footing, as has already been done in Lombardy at the beginning of this month. I have demonstrated the necessity of this to His Majesty the Emperor and His Highness Prince Metternich. If the Empress is still at Vienna, speak to her about it; otherwise, if she comes here, my dear Ménéval, she will have nothing to live upon.

"I am taking advantage of General Nugent's departure to get a letter through to you as soon as possible ; but here is another misfortune. The posts are delayed, so that to get a letter from Vienna takes at least a month.

"I have informed you that we are entirely without plate and linen ; but this is another business, on which I must have Her Majesty's wishes. Besides two old state coaches, we have nothing here for the Empress's use—no carriages nor horses ; and if I have to get carriages for her that will be another bother, and you must write to me about it at once. Neither at Parma, nor at Milan, is anything used but little *diligences*, or else country carts without seats. So it will be difficult to buy or get any ; perhaps, even, I should have to order them to be made.

"Good-bye, I am going to work ; my ante-room is full of creditors—clergy whose salaries have not been paid for a year, magistrates who have not been paid for three months, caterers who are ruined. Altogether it is chaos, and I do not think I am making game of you. If I succeed in settling this business, you can put up a statue to me."

Poor Marescalchi, as we have seen in his mistress's letter, had not earned his memorial. For Franz, by a decree of July 27, revoked the Provisional Government, and made Magawly regent. The latter accepted office really more to please the Kaiser than for self-advancement. By the beginning of August Magawly was back at Parma from Vienna with unlimited powers, only he was to report every month to the Kaiser. Marescalchi was the Imperial Commissioner, but only to administer high politics and Austrian affairs.

Magawly brought in his pocket 50,000 francs for the poor, to set up a Mont de Piété ; but he brought

also the new system of government devised by the Kaiser and himself. It was to be absolute, but not despotic. Paternal laws were to emanate from the Sovereign, who was to be surrounded by a chief minister and high officials ; the best of the Napoleonic administration was to be retained ; agriculture especially was to be fostered, and equal and merciful justice meted out. From the correspondence which passed between him and Magawly it is seen that Franz wished to make the Government of Parma the best, within the limits of absolutism, of any in Italy, surpassing even that of Vienna or anything that was thought good enough for Lombardy. On the other hand, Magawly, overstepping the limits set by his master, tried to retain the greater part of the institutions of the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic Governments. Franz let it pass because he did not wish the wife of Napoleon to undo in her little State all that Napoleon had done for the benefit of the people. In this he differed from the other Italian princes who had returned to their kingdoms, and who voluntarily closed their eyes to all the good that had accrued from the meteor passage of Bonaparte.

Magawly divided the Duchy into three governorships—Parma, Piacenza, Guastalla. These were to be under the orders of himself, as minister under the orders of the Duchess ; a Council of State to decide Government affairs ; in each of the three governorships a Council ; a special council for direct contributions ; a general comptroller for indirect contributions ; in each commune a judge and a council ; a comptroller for state property and the ducal household ; an officer in charge of irrigation, bridges, causeways ; in each centre a *juge de paix* ; in each governorship a civil and criminal court ; one court of appeal for civil causes and correction, divided into two sessions, forming together one court of cassation.

Magawly had suggested Mistrali as Governor of Guastalla. On the 6th, two days after his return from Vienna, the new Government was proclaimed, and all the new officials took oath to Marie Louise.

She sent Bausset to Parma to spy out the land. He reached Parma in fear and trembling of suffering the fate of Sieur Capprei ; he found a great upset had taken place in the Government.

"And all this has been done," he wrote to Ménéval, "without the least preliminary communication having been made to our loyal Marescalchi. The visit of his successor informed him of the change in his position, and I found him still sore over his disappointment. No one had better intentions, but he could not bring himself to deal great blows. All the Provisional is down, but the discontented are augmented by it. Marescalchi told me of a part of the new instructions which have been sent to him in his new post as minister of Austria at the court of Parma. In these an extreme severity is exercised over everything that can concern France, and he is enjoined not to suffer the presence of any Frenchman in the States of Parma, unless he be of those who accompany the Empress, and they again warn him most strongly to keep great watch on everything that regards the island of Elba. . . . Orders also to send the fifty-five Poles to their own country if they will not enroll themselves in the Austrian army. As there is three months' pay owing to them, these orders demand a fresh reply from Vienna. Perhaps Her Majesty the Empress may be able to obtain leave from her father that she may keep them in her service, which they much desire.

"The clause of the Constitution which lays down that no foreigners may be employed in the Government does not concern Frenchmen attached to the Empress's suite, and, rather a remarkable thing, the new Prime Minister

is a fellow-countryman of my wife, and born in Ireland—first infraction ; moreover, the Sieur Abbé Communsard, new Councillor of State, is also Irish-born. As you see, these are arrangements with Heaven. One cannot hide from oneself the real advantages of the changes made in the Government of Parma. A great economy in the political machinery must necessarily result, and, on the other hand, a reversion of favour will be to the advantage of Her Majesty, who has become a refuge for some and a hope for all who, being suppressed, flatter themselves that they are going to be re-employed.

“ I have been very well received in this country. They are grateful to me for not shutting my door to any one, not even to the very numerous scullions of the old dukes. I am busying myself preparing everything that is necessary for the household. The disorder is great, the resources are nil ; for the Regency, not content with the enormous debts that you are aware of, has had the extreme kindness to mortgage the private domains of the Crown till the end of November.

“ Her Majesty expects to come here soon, my dear Ménéval ; I can hardly believe that her father will consent to it. To judge by the political clouds which hover over the opening of the Congress of Vienna, it is probable that Italy may not be very quiet. The King of Naples is very active. He has a splendid army, a treasury full to the rim, and his forces have been remarkably increased by deserters of nearly all the old army of Italy, who have entered his service. People are grumbling under their breath, and, I tell you the same between ourselves, that he has designs on the States of Bologna, and that, at the present moment, he is busy reviewing his troops on the frontiers of the three legations.

“ This land is dull, the women not very pretty. The

climate is burning, the opera second-rate, the palace very old ; but I am busy arranging the Palace of the Garden for her Majesty's reception. For some thousands of francs she will have a fine palace, quite detached.

"Have you heard in your town that they are considering at the Congress an exchange of the Duchies of Parma with the three Legations—Bologna, Ferrara, and Ravenna ? The Emperor of Austria talked in that way to Marescalchi, always understood that the projects of his Neapolitan Majesty are reduced to their proper value. From all this one must conclude that the fate of Her Majesty is uncertain, that her journey, in spite of her wishes, is still far off, and that probably we are still fated to go and taste the ineffable joys of the sojourn at Schönbrunn. The will of God be done ! I am for ever devoted to the service of Her Majesty, and shall remain faithful to her everywhere and through everything. The Emperor of Austria has appointed the Conte di San Vitale to be her Grand Chamberlain. That is a piece of news she only heard through me.

"I was forgetting to tell you that the palace of Colorno is fine, in good repair, and practically furnished. It is not the same with the other old palaces ; there the walls are hardly standing !

"BAUSSET."

To add to the sadness of August 15, so different to the fête-day of the two Napoleons for the four last years, came a letter from Metternich to the little villa at Aix, where Marie Louise sat distraught, only the Duchesse of all her old friends near her, and she going away in two days, leaving her with the power of Neipperg closing over her, the fascination of this strong, dangerous man paralysing her conscience and will, as the python stupefies its victim before it kills it.

Metternich's letter was courteous, evasive, and treacherous.

"MADAME,

" Assured of the feelings, of the confidence with which Your Imperial Majesty has deigned on so many occasions to give me flattering proofs, I address myself directly to Your Majesty in circumstances of infinite importance for her and her son.

" Your Majesty intends to go to Parma at the beginning of September. The Emperor, her august father, is preparing to write to her to dissuade her from the journey at this present moment. I take the respectful liberty of showing her how impossible it is.

" The presence of Your Majesty at Parma before the end of the Congress would put her in a state of perpetual compromise. It would be, in my private opinion, even possible that it would be prejudicial to her possession of the Duchy. The branch of the house of Bourbon, formerly in possession of Parma, is very active ; it has much support in France, in Spain. The least trouble in Italy might be more favourable to it than it is possible to foresee at this moment, and, in the proximity of provinces provisionally administered, might complicate matters extremely. Thus the royalist and the Jacobin parties might draw a direct advantage from a step for which there is no apparent use. The Emperor has given orders to relieve the Parmesan territory as much as possible by reducing the number of troops which weigh it down ; some are necessary to maintain public order, until the time of the permanent organization, and it is only then that Your Majesty can go and take possession of her domains.

" Let Your Majesty rely on my way of regarding this question. Full of the most eager interest in her,

I should not be fulfilling a duty I consider sacred if I did not point out to her, with all the candidness of my character, the importance of her deigning to return here, of understanding the real position of affairs in her dominions, and that, at the end of the Congress, which will not be prolonged beyond the end of the month of November, she can betake herself to her States in full and complete security.

“Deign, madame, to receive the homage of my most profound respect.

“METTERNICH.”

At first Marie Louise was crushed by this reply, which she accepted as a command, but which did not deceive even her. How impossible it was that the Congress, with all its web of conflicting interests to unravel, could be over in six weeks, no one knew better than Metternich. Had she not heard that Parma was peaceful, the government in working order, and all without the cognizance or orders of its sovereign?

The truth was, as we have seen in Bausset's letter, that King Joachim Murat was by no means quiescent in Naples. Austria and England were willing that he should continue to enjoy the fruits of his treachery to his benefactor and brother-in-law. But Talleyrand saw, in the presence on the throne of Naples of one who had been, and might still be at heart, a creature of Napoleon's, a menace to the peace of Italy, if not of Europe. If to Murat at Naples, and Napoleon at Elba, were added Marie Louise and her son in Parma, might not Italy become the focus of a Bonapartist movement which might envelop Europe? For the present the Allies were therefore insistent that the Empress should hold aloof, and Parma remain under the iron hand of Austria.

But Marie Louise, no politician, did not grasp this.

Neipperg encouraged her in her hankering for Parma, independence, and peace. He was no longer young ; he had had enough of fighting ; the position of a Prince-Consort in a snug little independent kingdom, with an attractive young ruler, was a prospect not unpleasing to the wily diplomatist.

In the evening of the day she received Metternich's letter, Marie Louise poured out her soul to Ménéval :

"I have just received your letter of August 9. I am really troubled at the long time; one receives very old news. I send you a copy of a letter of Prince Metternich, which will inform you of the news which M. de Karaczai has brought back. I am very unhappy at the idea of being obliged to return to Vienna, all the more because they have given me no good reason. I do not mean to go to Vienna before the end of September or the beginning of October. I shall leave here 3rd or 4th of September, and I shall go to Geneva, and thence to Berne, where I shall stay a fortnight, and a week in the first town; after that I shall go to Vienna. . . . If you come and share my exile, I feel how very painful it will be to you, but, at the same time, I am too selfish not to wish it. I need your advice, to talk to you; you know all the trust I have in you, and one of the pleasantest thoughts I can dwell on at this moment is to keep you with me. . . . The Duchesse de Montebello will tell you many things verbally which I cannot write to you, for I am very sad, though quite resigned. It is to-morrow that I shall be dealt the severest blow of all, that of saying good-bye to the Duchesse; but I do not pity myself—I should be accustomed to all possible misfortune. What comforts me is to think that there are still kind people sorry for me, and I am pleased to think that you are one."

The Comtesse de Brignole felt as did her mistress,

and sent a letter in the same terms to Ménéval by Dr. Corvisart, who followed his friend the Duchesse to Paris :

" Nothing has altered since her [Montebello's] departure. The Empress seems to wish for you very much, and, to speak candidly, I think that, if your affairs do not suffer too much, you would do well to come, for you could be useful to her. You know that everything is being done at Parma *without her*, but in her name. A Grand Chamberlain has been appointed, who is to go to Vienna to take up his duties with his new sovereign. All things considered, I am certain that she will have Parma, but I cannot tell when she will be settled there. We shall be at Schönbrunn on October 15 ; till then we shall make excursions in beautiful Switzerland. I had suggested to Her Majesty to allow me to await her return in Italy, but she seems to desire that I should stay with her, and I have no other will, as you know. . . . The new Constitution excludes, by a special clause, all foreigners from employment in the government of Parma. The extreme pliancy of the Empress may lead to this measure affecting even her household. God grant a fresh war may not upset everything ! They say the Congress will not last long.

" A thousand remembrances to Madame de Ménéval. If you have a safe opportunity, write to me and tell my good Douglas of it. The best of all would be *yourself* ; but I fear that this will seem to you selfishness, and you will not be wrong. The person to whom you wrote on your departure is well, and behaves reasonably. I add that she makes much of you. . . . Give me news and particulars of *yourself* and your children. Do not neglect your own interests in Paris, but try and come back to us very quickly."

Madame de Brignole undoubtedly referred to the Empress. She was far too clever not to see how she was

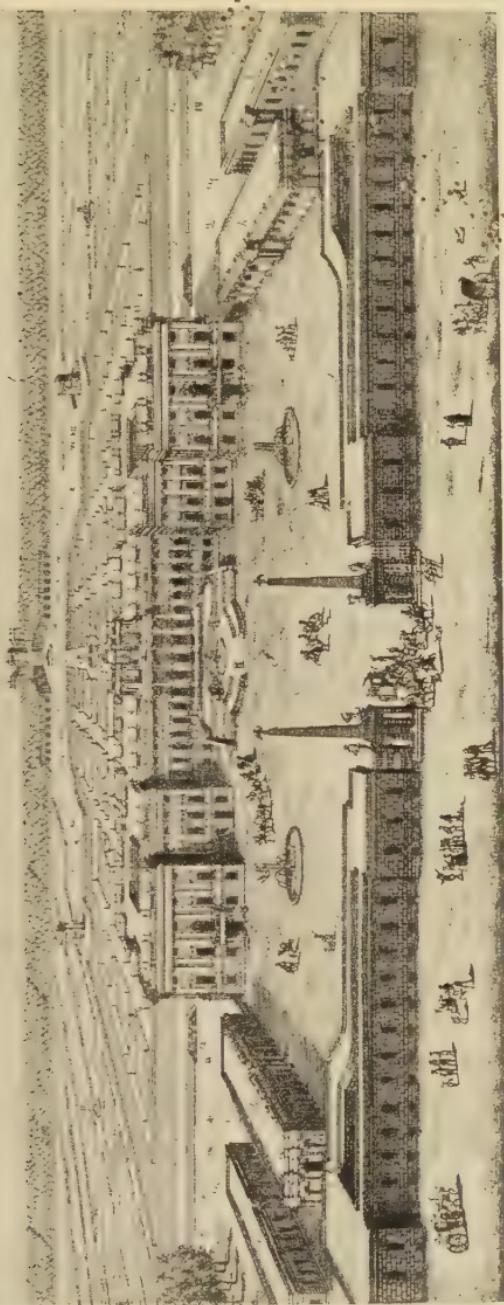
drifting, but, born intriguer though she was, she may yet have had a conscience, which led her to warn Ménéval before matters had gone too far.

At this moment Neipperg took a step which can only be construed by considering him a past-master in the art of love-making. *Reculer pour mieux sauter*, was his line. He wrote to the Kaiser asking leave to give up his post and rejoin his division at Pavia, showing that his appointment, which was only to last while the Empress was on French soil, now came to an end, as she was leaving it. But his request was refused ; Neipperg had now become indispensable both to Marie Louise and to Austria. For, a few weeks later, the French ambassador at Vienna wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris that Neipperg was confirmed in his office of gaoler to the Empress :

“ I do not know if you are aware that M. le Comte Neipperg has been given by the Emperor of Austria as *surveillant* to the Archduchess Marie Louise, whom he has to warn not to do anything that could injure, or even displease the King, but especially that he may narrowly watch the Archduchess in case she wishes to go and rejoin her husband, and then, after persuasion, to forbid her absolutely if she persists.”

At this moment Napoleon wrote again to his wife. By different channels he made four different attempts during these weeks to reach her, telling her he expected her at the end of September. He was hurrying on the decoration of her apartments at San Martino, himself suggesting to the artist a symbolical design for the drawing-room ceiling : “ two doves, tied by the same ribbon, the knot of which tightens as they draw farther apart.” He begs for more frequent news, asking her to write to him “ under the name of M. Senno, and to address letters to Genoa under cover to Sieur Constantine Gatelli,” a Genoese merchant, with whom “ he had to do

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF SCHÖNBRÜNN.





business about his poultry-yard and herd of cows at San Martino."

Marie Louise hastened to tell Ménéval of this letter, while thanking him for his offer to follow her anywhere and under all circumstances, and hoping to see him again very soon.

"I wish you might arrange so as to be deprived of the society of Madame de Ménéval for as short a time as possible. I feel how sad that would be, and I fear she will end by owing me a grudge.

"I have replied to my father as well as to Prince Metternich. I flattered the latter up as to the trust I had in him, and I especially dwelt on the satisfaction I experienced in the promise he gave me that I should soon go to Parma. It appears that M. Magawly is making many wise changes there, and is reforming many of the abuses of the Provisional Government. I have received a long letter from M. de Bausset. . . . I have received news of the Emperor of August 6. He says many kind things about you to me, and recommends me not to believe all that people may say against him. He was well, was happy, peaceful, and thinking especially a great deal about me and his son. . . . I beg you to remember me kindly to Madame de Ménéval. . . . I hope that I shall soon hear of her happy delivery, and I warn you that I wish to be the godmother of the child."

One cannot but notice, in this letter, how completely Napoleon takes the second place in her thoughts. Marie Louise pities herself first and foremost for not being allowed to go to Parma, and then only gives a thought to the prisoner-husband to whose call she was shutting her ears. Yet it was only eight months since they had parted.

Love makes people selfish—to all but the loved one. Now Marie Louise was naturally selfish. One day she

told Napoleon that she was, and he replied : "It is the most horrible vice I know!"

Her next letter to Ménéval shows her in that light, butterfly mood which was so attractive.

"Here is the time approaching when I may hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again. I am eagerly awaiting it ; you know how much I need your advice. A presentiment tells me that I shall see you again at Geneva. I am impatiently waiting for the journal of the tour you tell me about. I will not read it, however, before finishing mine. I am sure it is so well done that I shall be quite disgusted with my work if I make acquaintance with it at once. I am sure, also, that you will exclaim at my indolence, when you hear that I am still at the foot of the Glacier des Boissons. I fear that one of its numerous icicles has frozen my imagination, for when I wish to set to work I feel completely disengaged. However, I shall finish it before I leave here, because I intend to write one of my tour in Switzerland. My health has been rather upset the last few days. I have had five attacks of fever, which have obliged me to discontinue my baths. I shall begin them again to-morrow till the 5th, and then I shall leave on the 4th (*sic*). I do not go for such long excursions. I swore to the doctors not to stay out so late, and I keep scrupulously to my word." And then follows a message to the Duchesse about sending her a hairdresser.

A few days later she wrote again thanking him for his wishes on her fête-day. She "was sure that they are among the most sincere that have been made for me. I am much touched by your willingness to follow me to Vienna ; believe me that I have vowed to you a gratitude proof to all temptations, for you know you won my friendship a long time ago. I shall not reply to you by this channel, for the post is not very

sure. I hope at least they will be civil enough to send my letters to their destination after reading them. My health is much better; I still take the baths, which suit me very well, and I hope you will find me fatter. . . . I shall hasten to read to-day your journal of the Chamounix tour; I am sure it will be charming. I worked at mine a little yesterday, but it has not got on much; I fear it will not be finished before your return; besides, yours will discourage me."

After the departure of the Duchesse de Montebello, Marie Louise missed her so that she did not wish to stay on at Aix any longer. She wanted, moreover, a change, and fresh excitement to stifle her conscience and drown her worries.

The politicians were also anxious that the Empress should quit French soil. The air was full of Bonapartist plotting; Fouché had sent emissaries to Aix; perhaps even Corvisart and Isabey had been sounding her as to a regency. In any case the French Government began to take cognizance of her stay at Aix. At the Ministerial Council on August 5 the Duc de Berri said that "Marie Louise behaves at Aix in the most ridiculous manner; that she does not take the waters, and spends her days surrounded by French officials."

On August 9 Talleyrand wrote to Metternich "that, the course of baths having been quite finished for Madame the Archduchess, it was more convenient that her stay be not prolonged."

"Although," wrote Neipperg to the Kaiser, "the French Government seemed latterly pacified about our stay here, they are nevertheless glad over our speedy departure."

## CHAPTER XXI

### *AN ILLICIT HONEYMOON?*

THE French Government, as will be seen, had disquieted itself quite unnecessarily.

On August 20 Napoleon, who had been ten days without any news of Marie Louise, and who was anxious, determined to try to establish direct communication with her. From Molini he sent for a captain of the guards, Hurault de Sorbéc, whom he had married to one of the Empress's *dames d'annonce*. To him he explained that he wished to give him leave of absence to see his young wife, and that, at all risks, he was to gain access to the Empress secretly, and, with his wife's help, persuade her to embark with him at Genoa.

Hurault reached Geneva, where Marie Louise had arrived on September 7. His efforts to get into personal communication with the Empress, or to obtain a reply from her, entirely failed. He was arrested, headed off towards Paris, and forbidden by the police to return to Elba.

Marie Louise wrote straight off to the Kaiser detailing what had happened. "I have received the visit of an officer of the Emperor's, the bearer of a letter in which he told me to leave at once for Elba, where he awaits me with much impatience. In a week this is the second officer I have received. By the first (it was Colonel Laczinsky) I replied that I was to return to Vienna in a

few days, and that it would be impossible for me, without your permission, to leave for the island ; to the second letter, that of Captain Hurault, I have not yet replied. I tell you all this, dear papa, because I place confidence in you and I do not wish all these stories to give you any distrust of what I do. Rest assured that I have now less than ever the wish to undertake this journey, and that I give you my word of honour not to undertake it without asking your leave. I beg you to tell me what I should reply to the Emperor on this subject."

Hurault was arrested the evening that Ménéval reached Geneva from Paris to rejoin the Empress. He was unaware of it till after the short interview he had with her on arrival. "I received an extremely friendly welcome from Her Majesty," he writes to his wife that evening. "She seemed very touched to see me back again. I found her fatter, and in perfect health. Moreover, she seemed very happy and contented. She told me M. Hurault had been given a letter from her to you in which she begged you to receive some papers she was sending back to me. So if you see him, he will, perhaps, speak to you about his mission, which was to bring the Empress back to Elba ; but he found *some one very little prepared to follow him.* . . . When I face the greatness of the sacrifice I have made, and the little good it will do, I am tempted to turn back and not to follow the Empress. Generally such sacrifices are only appreciated in proportion as they fit in with *circumstances.* God grant I may not have to regret mine. . . . But I cannot help thinking that it is an unpleasant risk to run."

Indeed poor Ménéval had left his home and his family to find that he was not wanted. No wonder there is a distinct change and a sort of despair in his tone. For Marie Louise ordered him to meet her at Berne after a short tour she was about to make in the Oberland,

and started off next day with only the Comtesse de Brignole, Neipperg, his aide-de-camp Karaczaï, Bausset, Cussy, Madame Hurault and Mademoiselle Rabusson, *lectrices*, and a couple of other subordinates.

They drove from "Les Sécherons" to Lausanne, where they slept, and next day went on to Payenne. About an hour before reaching that place, writes Bausset, "Madame di Colorno stopped her carriage to hear a little patriarchal serenade which was offered her by the Protestant *pasteur* of Payenne, who had placed himself on the edge of the wood of Boulez. The songs of this worthy man were accompanied by his two daughters, who played, one on the violin and one on the flute. After this little family concert they offered Her Majesty fruit and flowers. The brother of these two girls, dressed in the old Helvetian costume and standing on the edge of the wood, sang the 'Ranz des Vaches !' The young man had a very fine voice, and, to make the illusion more complete, he caressed with his hands two extremely beautiful cows. This little impromptu *fête-champêtre* was a complete success," and touched the Duchess of Colorno almost to tears.

Sleeping at Freiburg, the Empress reached Berne the next day, the 11th. Here she stayed the night and left behind Bausset, who was joined next day by Ménéval. "M. de Ménéval," says the *grand maître*, "had seen enough snow in the Russian steppes, and we did not care to go running about the mountains covered with it." But the Empress had left a note for her secretary. "She suggested to me to come and join her, *in case it pleased me, and desiring me to do what suited me best*. You think, perhaps," he adds to his wife, "that I shall start off, but I will confess to you that I am not at all disposed to do so. To tell you the reasons would be too long and too difficult to explain in a letter which will be submitted to the inquisition, and of which each word would be misinterpreted. Her Majesty

has not a French person in her suite. She has left Bausset and Cussy at Berne. If she wanted to have me with her she would have waited for me, for she intended to stop a day to rest at Berne. Otherwise, the protestations of friendship, the praises to every one over my returning to her, accompanied by compliments, really astonish me!"

This sudden change of attitude to the faithful old friend whom Marie Louise had deemed so indispensable requires explanation. This sudden leaving behind of Ménéval and Bausset and Cussy must have had a motive. Ostensibly that motive was that they should assist at the marriage at Berne of Mlle de Rabusson, long engaged to Dr. Herceau, now the Empress's private physician. Mlle de Rabusson was one of the *lectrices*, or *dames d'annonce*, who had accompanied the Empress when she left France. From her subsequent conduct at Schönbrunn there is reason to believe that she was the go-between for Neipperg and Marie Louise.

Ménéval, in his letters to his wife, seems to hint that something had occurred, and that he did not find things with the Empress as he had left them. We have seen how, just before starting for the Oberland, she had utterly declined any emissaries or any overtures from Napoleon, that in her letter to her father she seems to have irrevocably broken with him. Can the following account of what had been happening at Elba only a few days before Marie Louise left Aix offer any solution of the mystery?

On the highest point of the island of Elba, Monte Capanna, 2,400 feet above the sea, by the chapel of the Madonna del Monte, hung with votive offerings, lies, among the old chestnut-trees, a little house of five rooms called "The Hermitage." Beyond the castle of Marciana the carriage road ceases, and only a paved mule-path,

flanked here and there by a shrine, leads to the summit. From the windows of the Hermitage you can see Corsica, Livorno, Piombino. In the rock behind there are three springs. On the crest of the mountain blaze beacon-fires when necessary. In the autumn of 1814 the Hermitage became the last scene of a pathetic idyll.

"The 1st of September, 1814, Napoleon had spent part of the day on the height of Pomonte, in the Isle of Elba, seeking, with the aid of a telescope, to descry and recognize any shipping which appeared on the horizon. As night fell the Emperor, returning to the house he occupied, ordered three horses to be saddled, to be taken to a certain place which he designated, and there to await the orders of the Grand Marshal. The officer ordered on this duty reached the appointed spot at ten o'clock with the carriage and horses. It was a beautiful, moonlit night. At this moment a boat was being rowed towards the mole. Three ladies and a child, who were in the boat, landed. General Bertrand saluted them respectfully and helped them into the carriage. They started, and at the cross-roads of Proachia they met Napoleon, who was mounted on a white horse and followed by a troop of lancers and Mamelukes. The carriage stopped. The Emperor dismounted and opened the right-hand door, and got in alone amid a profound silence. They started off again, and quickly reached the cross-roads of Proachia. At this spot the carriage, not being able to go any farther on account of the bad road, the Emperor, the ladies and the child, got out and mounted the horses brought by the orderly officer. The child was in the arms of one lady, and the officer, who was on foot, led her horse by the bridle. When they got near the Hermitage Napoleon spurred on the two horses and reached it a few moments before the procession. A tent had been put up under a big chestnut-tree. The lady and the child came up to them after a few minutes

and went with him into the tent. The fair unknown remained there two days and two nights without showing herself. Napoleon only emerged twice to give orders. During that time all access to the heights was prohibited to every one, even to Madame Mère, who was staying in a village near."

On September 3 the fair unknown left the island as mysteriously as she came, and went to Naples, bearing a message for Murat.

The rumour of this mysterious visitor spread, of course, through the island and reached the mainland. Reported by an Italian officer of Napoleon's to a French spy, it was bruited about that the Empress and her son had been to Elba. The Florence director of police wrote "that the Empress came from Porto Maurizo, and really arrived under the name of Countess Poniatowski," with a little boy dressed in Polish fashion. But while Lapi, the English Commissary, and also comptroller to the Emperor's estates in the island, did not believe the visitor to be indeed Marie Louise, a few weeks later the British Consul at Livorno gravely informed the British Government that the Empress was *enceinte* in consequence of her visit to the island !

But had Napoleon, on receiving Marie Louise's refusal to rejoin him, bethought him of the Comtesse Walewska, of her coming to Fontainebleau at the moment of his deepest misery, and imploring him to take her with him to Elba? Had he now, forsaken by Marie Louise, sent for her and her son? If so, the news of her visit had probably reached Neipperg, and he had used his knowledge as his trump card, and completed Marie Louise's ruin by divulging her husband's infidelity. Lady Burghersh, the confidante of Marie Louise, used to say, writes her daughter, "that none of Napoleon's letters were allowed to reach her [the Empress], and that she was

told the reason of his silence was that he did not want her—that Madame Walewska, the woman he really cared for, had joined him there, and that, as he had only wanted her to strengthen his dynasty and to be a figurehead at his Court, she would be only in his way if she went to Elba."

In any case, in addition to the Walewska visit, there was in December that of a certain notorious adventuress calling herself Comtesse de Rohan, and she was received by the Emperor.

Accompanied only by Madame de Brignole and the general, the Empress spent ten days in the Oberland, visiting the glaciers of Grindelwald, the falls of Lauterbrunnen, and, with much interest, the great charitable, educational, and agricultural establishments at Hofwil, near Berne. Well-educated herself, Marie Louise took an interest in such matters, and Napoleon had encouraged her.

When he met the Empress again at Berne Ménéval found her "in perfect health, fat and crimson, delighted with her tour, which had been most arduous, as those said who had accompanied her, but which she had not found fatiguing. Having seen me arrive with M. de Cussy, she came to meet me at Madame de Brignole's, where she had been told I was. She carried me off to her rooms, and said the pleasantest and kindest things to me—in fact, was charming. She talked to me for two hours about business affairs, spoke of you, and how she shared your sorrow, of the gratitude she owed you, of the wish she had to keep you near her, and to make you one of her best friends."

The first news which greeted Marie Louise on her return to Berne was that of the death of her beloved grandmother. The brave old lady had died, as it were, in harness, going to bed in perfect health and being found dead in the morning, her hand vainly stretched towards the bell-rope. Here was yet another prop which Marie Louise would find removed when she returned to Vienna !

She felt her grandmother's death very much and shut herself up for two days.

But an unexpected visitor came to distract her in the shape of Caroline, Princess of Wales, who, in her wanderings about Europe "like a madwoman"—as the Bishop Horthosia wrote to Talleyrand—happened at that moment to find herself at Berne. As she was the wife of the Regent of one of the countries whose arms had overthrown Napoleon, any recognition of Caroline by Marie Louise was distinctly unnecessary and not in the best of tastes. Yet when the former sent her chamberlain, Lord Craven to pay his respects, the Empress, in return, despatched Bausset to invite her to dinner. Probably she was instigated thereto by Neipperg, who thought the *rencontre* would amuse her.

Bausset found a woman of forty-six, of medium height, with regular and pronounced features, and a pleasant and expressive countenance. She wore an ample dress of white muslin trimmed with lace and had a long lace veil falling over her shoulders. A row of diamonds was set on the veil like a diadem, and a magnificent pearl necklace was round her neck. She looked like an ancient Greek priestess. "She held by the hand a child of ten to eleven years of age." "This is my protégé," she told him; "it is the Austin who has been mentioned in those Memoirs which have been attributed to me."

Caroline was accompanied by a lady-in-waiting, Lady Forbes, as odd a figure as her mistress, by Lord Craven, and Gill, chamberlains, Captain Hesse, her equerry, and a Dr. Holland. Ménéval and Bausset both describe the dinner-party.

"We had to dine yesterday the Princess of Wales, who kept the newspapers so busy two years ago. She is a woman of forty to forty-five, small and fat, with a very fine head, but eyes which bear witness to some of her love-

affairs real and supposititious. She is accompanied by a lady-in-waiting and four officers. She is going to Rome, where she intends to spend the winter. I was pleased to find myself in the presence of this Princess, quite historical by reason of the scandal which the English made in Europe over her and the Prince Regent, her husband. The evening was one of the gayest I have ever seen. We made music. The Princess, who was asked to sing, consented. The Empress spoke of the dread she had of singing before people, but the Princess assured her that she had never sung except to her friends. In consequence, she sang a duet with her Majesty."

It was the famous duet out of *Don Juan*. Neipperg, at the piano, made a preliminary flourish of chords and runs, and Caroline, after the soft and melancholy prelude, began, in a love-sick voice :

Là, nos deux mains unies,  
Là, tu vas dire Oui.  
Par ces sentiers fleuris  
Eloignons nous d'ici.

Zerlina, "in the sweetest and most naive inflexion," replied to Don Juan :

Je veux et puis je n'ose,  
Le cœur me bat plus fort ;  
L'ivresse qu'il me cause,  
Me peut tromper encore.

Then Caroline responded, in a "masculine and sonorous voice."

"To tell you the effect her voice had on me is impossible ; I thought I should have choked. . . . The Empress, behind whom I was standing, unfortunately turned towards me in the middle of the song, and then—good-bye to time, she had to leave off under some pretext, for it was no longer possible to keep serious ! Otherwise the Princess of Wales—apart from her ridiculous dress

and appearance—looks an excellent woman, full of condescension and kindness, and putting every one at their ease. She has with her the famous child who is so often spoken of in the Memoirs, which, she assures every one, are only fiction ; but she did not bring him with her to the Empress. I saw him out walking yesterday ; he is about twelve, and has a very pretty face. Her lady-in-waiting has an appearance quite equal to that of her mistress. She looks like a little doll badly got up. The officers are very smart. The first is the son of a celebrated English-woman, Lady Cravén, who has married the Margrave of Anspach. . . . But I am using up all my paper telling you about a Princess who must interest you very little. I must, however, say a word about her get-up. She was swathed in ten yards of English lace, with a magnificent necklace of pearls ; a veil like Iphigenia entirely covered her and trained on the ground, hiding almost all her face, and was kept on by a diadem of diamonds like the crowns of opera-queens."

Despite the kindly welcome he had received, Ménéval was not happy at being back with Marie Louise. He tried to obtain leave to return direct to Vienna, but she begged him to accompany her on the little tour which she planned on the lake of Lucerne.

"Never has she been nicer to me," he writes to his wife, "for she has suggested making me her chamberlain, and you her lady-in-waiting. I quote this as a mark of her kindness, as she has no power to make these appointments ; and, besides, they would only be temporary, and the Congress will upset many things. I have therefore nothing to complain of personally with regard to her, but I cannot hide from myself that she is no longer that angel of purity and innocence which I left. . . . Her mind is not occupied as I should wish. You know my affectionate devotion to her ; it has redoubled since I see her entering

on a road which will lead her to ruin. I would wish to hide it from all the world, from you yourself. Therefore keep what I say now to yourself. Whatever happens to her, one must respect her for her rank, her valuable good qualities, the gratitude which I owe for her kindnesses. She is full of good feelings, but she is surrounded by shoals. . . . Her youth and inexperience need a guide and a protector so much!"

We now see that Ménéval entertained no illusions as to Marie Louise's conduct. He was shortly to find proofs of it.

Bausset and Madame Hurault were sent with the carriages to await the party at Linden, on the lake of Constance; Cussy went back to Paris. Only Neipperg, his aide-de-camp, Brignole, the two Herceaus, and Ménéval went with the Empress to Lucerne on September 24. Next day they rowed down the lake to the ruins of the castle of the Hapsburgs, landing in the boat at the foot of the ruins. Among them, Neipperg, with a cry of triumph, picked up a piece of iron, flat and pointed, and which he pretended to recognize as a piece of Rudolph's lance. This Marie Louse had set in rings and gave to Madame de Brignole, Neipperg, Bausset, and Ménéval, as souvenirs of this romantic occasion.

At Küschnach they landed and visited the chapel of William Tell. They went up the Righi to the "Hotel of the Golden Sun," then the only inn among some half-dozen houses on the then lonely spot. Here the night was spent, and, next day, the party ascended the Righi Kulm in splendid weather, and had a fine view of the magnificent panorama.

It was in this little inn that Ménéval made the discovery he suspected and dreaded. For some days, as we have seen, he had been troubled by many little things he had noticed. The Empress was no longer treated

with the ceremony and etiquette with which, as the daughter of her father, she had always been surrounded. That he put down to the freedom of travelling, and there was nothing in it indecorous. But besides this there was "a certain laxity of manner, permitted to one person only," which was quite another thing. Further, he noticed in the Righi inn that a custom invariably observed had been discontinued. It was a wooden house, arranged with bedrooms on each side of the corridors, and which did not communicate. The footman on duty, whose business it was to sleep across the Empress's door, received orders to sleep downstairs. In this present case this arrangement might not have been convenient to the Empress, who had no other exit to her room, yet this infraction of an established rule was much commented on by the persons of her suite.

Ménéval writes to his wife that he was discussing it with Madame de Brignole, "and, as I talked, I mechanically unfolded a map of Switzerland which was on the table, when a sealed note fell out, which I hastily picked up. In handing it back to Madame de Brignole I recognized the Empress's handwriting on the note, which was addressed to General Neipperg."

Madame de Brignole seemed a little taken aback, and said she had orders to give the map to General Neipperg, and did not know a note was in it. Ménéval did not know whether to believe her or not. Surprised and distressed, when they reached Schweitz next evening, he asked the Empress's leave to return direct to Vienna, alleging that important papers he had found awaiting him at Schweitz necessitated his departure.

The Empress tried to dissuade him, civilly, but eventually acceded to his request, and Ménéval departed, bearing her letter to her father for his fête-day on October 4, which he was to deliver at Schönbrunn. His

sudden departure was, of course, a source of much goss among the Empress's surroundings.

She herself left Schweitz a few hours later, and, trave ling by way of St. Gall, across the lake of Constance, to Munich to Braunau—where only four years before she had been handed over to Napoleon's mission as the French Empress—slept at Mölk. Then, spending all night in the carriage, she reached Schönbrunn on October 7, to the surprise of Ménéval, who did not expect her so soon.

She found her boy flourishing, and delighted to see her, loving and caressing. The Kaiser came at once alone to see his daughter. A few days later, in gratitude for the manner in which Neipperg had acquitted himself of his mission (!) he appointed him chamberlain to the Duke of Parma during the Congress of Vienna !

Ménéval, in a later judgment, writes : "The faults in which Marie Louise fell must be imputed to those whose hands she has been an instrument of hatred and vengeance. Her ties have been broken by the policy which formed them."

Lord Holland writes that Franz was "never gentle and benevolent. As for his daughter's marriage, one must admit the alternative, either that he consented to sacrifice his child to a cowardly policy, or that he craven abandoned her, and dethroned a Prince he had chosen for his son-in-law. He separated his daughter from the husband he had given her, and helped to disinherit his grandson. To obliterate from the mind of the daughter the memory of her exiled and dethroned husband, whose conduct to her had been irreproachable, they say he encouraged, and even himself connived at making her unfaithful."

END OF VOL. I







